

# THE HESPERIAN.

VOL. XXVIII.

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, JANUARY 6, 1899.

No. 14.

## LISBETH.

Mr. Shelley's horse had eaten Lisbeth's corn, and she sat on the door-step with her brown little hands folded in her lap and her eyes fixed resolutely on the big cherry-tree. Her white kitten lay on its back in the sun and fought with a red carpet-rag. But Lisbeth paid no attention to it. She was trying to count the cherries. She knew that if she turned her head she would see by the windmill the trampled stalks of her corn.

Mr. Shelley had stopped there by the windmill that morning and while he talked to her father, his horse—a great black old thing, Lisbeth indignantly remembered—had eaten every one of the thirteen stalks, and Lisbeth had stood by with a queer frozen feeling about her heart.

As she sat on the door-step counting the cherries, she remembered that Mr. Shelley had tried to kiss her when he went away and how he had laughed when she struggled. And then—Lisbeth almost thought she was dreaming—and then, she had slapped him!

Lisbeth held out the palm that had felt the warm tingle and looked at it curiously. She remembered that Mr. Shelley had put her down and ridden off. That her father had picked her up and carried her into the house, put her on the bed in the spare room and shut the door. Lisbeth had held her eyes fast closed until father was out of sight. She lay there a long time without moving, listening to the clatter of the dishes in the kitchen, the clucking of the chickens scratching at the morning-glory vines outside the window. And then she heard the clank of the heavy harness as the men rode the horses up from the field.

She did not dare even to creep to the window to see whether her father was leading old Jennie to water but cowered—a wretched, motionless heap—on the bed. When her mother came in, she sat up and gulpingly swallowed some milk. After that, she must have fallen asleep—Lisbeth wondered how such an unhappy little thing as she could sleep—for all at once her father was standing over her, asking whether his little Lisbeth wanted to go to town with the rest of them, and she had shaken her head miserably, "No." Her father went out, closed the door gently behind him. Then Lisbeth heard the rattle of wheels down the lane, and after awhile, she had stolen out for a drink and sat down here on the door-step.

She counted the cherries painstakingly. There were certainly twenty-one on that twig next the dead branch. Yes, there were just twenty-one. Lisbeth wondered whether Mr. Shelley knew there were thirteen stalks of corn, and that each one had grown from a little red corn that she had planted herself. She wondered whether he knew that each wash-day she had carried out soapy water to pour over them—or that her father had said that her corn was growing better than his, and that she was his little farmer.

Yes, that was what her father had called her—his little farmer—and now, Lisbeth buried her head in her lap. The white kitten had tired of his carpet-rag and was soberly licking

his paws with his rough red tongue. He came up softly and put his white paw on Lisbeth's bare little foot. She had forgotten about the kitten and jumped up so suddenly that he scampered away and climbed up the cherry tree—away up to the very branch on whose tip Lisbeth had counted the twenty-one cherries. She put her feet gingerly to the hot ground and walked over to the cherry tree and called coaxingly to the kitten, but he would not come down. Lisbeth took hold of the lowest branch and tried to swing herself up so that she could clasp her feet about the branch, but she had to give it up. She stood there for a little, out of breath, pushing her yellow hair back from her flushed face.

Then she went around the corner of the house and came back dragging a tub. She mounted on this and climbed nimbly up the tree. A dry twig caught in one of her tight little braids. In trying to unfasten it she saw the ripest, reddest looking cherry. She wondered if her mother would care if she should touch it, just squeeze it the least mite—only to see if it were soft.

Her fingers were just closing on it when the old Plymouth Rock rooster, scratching in the pea-vines, began to crow. Lisbeth started at the noise, clambered down the tree, and dragged the tub back to the north side of the house. As she came around the corner again, the kitten ran toward her, and she remembered why she had climbed the tree.

She laughed a little shamefacedly, put the kitten on her shoulder and went into the kitchen. She stood on a chair and, reaching into a big barrel, brought out a pan of cornmeal took this and a dipper of water out on the step, where she began to mix them with a smooth, little stick, spitting the kitten's paws with it once or twice when he seemed too curious. Then she brushed the step off clean and picked up the pan. She went bravely past the crushed corn by the windmill, over to the coop by the gooseberry bushes. The old hen began to cluck crossly. Lisbeth felt very sorry for the poor, old thing and shook a lot of meal where the hen could reach it, and then threw the rest of the dough in little lumps on the grass. The little chickens came rushing out, and Lisbeth picked up a soft, little, black and-white one and held it by her face. It picked viciously at her cheek. Lisbeth got up suddenly, letting the dough-pan fall. She put her hand to her cheek. That was where she had slapped Mr. Shelley. She laughed a little and rolled her handkerchief up into a bed and held the chicken on that. But the chicken was not as passive as Lisbeth had been and at last struggled free and ran back between the slats into the coop, chirping excitedly.

Lisbeth heard the team coming up the road and turned and scampered down the lane to meet it. Her father stopped the horses and she clambered nimbly over the wheel and sat down beside him. Her mother asked her whether any one had been there. Lisbeth shook her head, "No," and then she nodded, "Yes," that she had been a good girl. Her father put the ends of the lines in her hands, and she flapped them contentedly, nestling closer to him.

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