

## The Fun We Used to Have.

## I.

A dozen merry school girls, their little pig-tails flying, skipped around in a circle, singing lustily:

"Water, water, white-flower  
Growing up so high,  
We are all young ladies  
Expecting short to die.  
Excepting Lily Mason,  
She is the finest flower—  
Fine flower, fine, fine's she.  
Turn your back and tell your beau's name."

They stopped. The little girl in the center hung her head for a moment; she was thinking, perhaps. Then she caught Rosa by the neck, and whispered something in her ear. Lily's bright face turned scarlet. Her chubby fingers crept to her mouth.

Again the children joined their hands and sang, as only children can:

"Charlie Chester's a nice young man,  
He comes to the door with his hat in his hand.  
Down comes she all dressed in white,  
A rose in her bosom as white as snow.  
She pulls off her glove to show me a ring,  
Tomorrow, tomorrow the wedding will begin.  
Lily, Lily, don't you cry,  
Charlie will marry you bye and bye."

Clap, clap, clap, twenty little hands danced like fairies round Lily's blushing head.

"Oh girls, girls, there's Charlie, he's peeking round the corner," cried Rosa.

"Lily, there's Charlie," said Madge, sighing with tragic air.

"I don't care, I don't like him. He ain't neither."

"Nobody said you did, smarty. I know something you don't know anyway."

"The bell, the bell"—and away they ran, those little women.

## II.

Mary liked "old witch" because there was a story to it. What was the use of running to the road and then running back again for a "black man" who never tried to catch you? If you were one of the "big children, it would be different. But Mary was "little folks."

You have to be "little folks" to appreciate "old witch." There have to be a great many children for the "hired girl" to watch, and the "witch" to steal and the "mother" to bemoan.

The last was the part that fascinated Mary. She would have liked to be the "mother," herself, if she had dared to suggest such a thing. How she could have shaken the careless "hired girl" and then wrung her hands in the empty kitchen by the stones where the "kettle" had "boiled over." When she stood there in the long row of "children" she forgot everything in the troublesome world—even the dishes she must wash when she went home—those horrible dishes the plague of her seven small years.

She watched the "old witch" peep from her "house" in the weeds to see if the "mother" had gone to make garden. She waited, breathless, while the "hired girl" resolutely held the bar before the door. The certainty of the final entrance of the "witch," never spoiled her interest in the parley. There was always the delicious uncertainty, and the beautiful horror when the "hired girl" had gone down into the far cellar, and left the "children," a helpless line against the wall. And then, the greedy eyes of the "old witch" crouching by the kettle, making her quick, sure spring, and dragging—who could tell which "child?"—away. That was the horrible thing.

## III.

"It may be fun for you but its death for us."

Well might the frogs back in the shallow pasture creek croak this single mournful song.

It was not exactly a game that the children played—but the six cousins were ferocious cannibals. With a big tea-strainer, Howard scooped the water, and caught many an unlucky frog. Erdie pounded each poor fellow on the head, and dropped him lifeless into old coffee-pot. Jimmie cut off the legs, skinned them, and laid the soft white things on a mat of corn leaves.