

☉ Crop of Sunshine.

It was when Kitty Baker was eight years old that an invitation came for her to go into the country; and as she had never been away from home, this was the greatest event which had occurred in her life. Kitty herself was small and thin, but she had a strong buxom cousin who acted as dairymaid at a farm; and the farmer's wife, being a kind-hearted body, told Mary that she might have Kitty down for a week or two, and see whether country living and country air would not put a little color into her pale cheeks.

There was great excitement in the Baker household when this piece of news arrived; and Kitty became quite a personage in Broom Court, where her father and mother lived in rather a muddling fashion. For although Mr. Baker was a highly respectable costermonger and doing fairly well, Mrs. Baker said that with her large family to see to, and most of them a bit short-tempered, in which particular she freely confessed that they took after her, she never expected to be very comfortable.

Her own temper became shorter than ever during the next few days, when, in addition to her other manifold duties, was added the necessity of getting Kitty's humble wardrobe ready for the coming visit; but sharp words and saucy replies were matters of too frequent occurrence for an extra one or two to put anybody out. They did not mean much; and were merely regarded as a natural and convenient relief to one's feelings.

At length the eventful day came. Kitty looked quite spruce in a clean cotton frock; and her box, containing her Sunday clothes, and two brand new pinafores, having been solemnly corded in presence of the admiring family, just then assembled at tea, she said good-bye to them all, much as if she were about to go to Kamschatka or a little farther.

It was dusk when she got to her journey's end, quite tired out with excitement. Cousin Mary straight away popped her into bed, where she slept like a top, and woke early the next morning to find herself in a new world.

And what a wonderful world! Kitty fairly held her breath in astonishment, and did not know which to admire the most—the tall trees rustling in the sunshine, the grass where their shadows lay so softly, the sweet-smelling flowers, or the meadows stretching away and away, till they seemed to join the blue sky.

Presently Mary went milking. Kitty looked on at a respectful distance—she mistrusted those cows. Mary laughed as she pressed the sweet, rich milk from their udders; and a draught of it went a long way to dispel Kitty's doubts. Still she could not quite rid herself of the notion that they were fearsome beasts, with whom it would not do to be too familiar.

The other live things about the farm were different. While Mary carried her shining pails to the dairy, Kitty struck up a friendship with the old magpie, which went hopping about at his own sweet will. Then she and Pons, the housedog, had a confidential chat; and, as for the chickens, they were endless amusement—from the fluffy little yellow things popping in and out under the old hen's wings to the stately rooster leading forth his pretty brown wives to scratch for dainties in the dust.

"That hen with the gray tail is mine!" suddenly announced a voice which seemed to come from the clouds. Kitty looked up, and saw a child about her own age standing at the top of the dairy steps.

"I'm Fanny Benson," continued the mistress of the hen with the gray tail. "I know who you are—mother told me that you were going to stay with Mary. Come along! I'll show you the orchard, and the pigs, and—"

"I've seen the cows!" put in Kitty, hurriedly.

"Oh! well, you haven't seen the ducks, and the new kittens, and my wax baby doll, and the frogs, and the donkey," said Fanny, anxious to do the honors properly.

So together they made the round of these varied attractions; and then spent a merry hour playing hide and seek in the garden.

The arbor was "home," and the lavender bushes and quaintly cut box-trees made capital nooks for hiding—a great deal pleasanter than those Kitty was used to in Broom Court. She raced between the clove-scented pinks and the fuschias, hanging from their stems like fairy bells, and thought that she had never enjoyed anything so much. The paths were rather puzzling when it came to be her turn to hide. Her new friend's voice sounded now on this side, now on that. At last she darted down a narrow path as yet untried, and stayed there so long that Fanny left her hiding place and became again the seeker. She found Kitty gazing intently on the border, where appeared Fanny's name traced in full on the dark mould—Fanny Benson—it looked very pretty; but Kitty raised an awestruck face. "How

could it come up so? your very name, and just like real writing!"

This was too much for country-bred Fanny, who laughed longer and louder than was quite polite in a hostess.

"Why, you goose—," she began.

"I'm not a goose!" cried the town maiden, angrily. "You've no business to call me a goose, and I won't play—so there!"

"She's a regular little spitfire," said Fanny to her mother that evening. "But I don't believe she means the cross things she says, for she's good-tempered the minute after. And isn't it funny, she doesn't seem to think half so much of my new doll as of the little bit of garden father gave me for my own—just fancy, when Flora can open and shut her eyes, and has such lovely hair!"

It was quite true. Flora's attractions were lost upon Kitty; while upon that "little bit of garden" she looked with longing and eager eyes.

Fanny had told her all about it; how the three-cornered bed between the gooseberry bush and the tall cherry tree was hers; how she sowed mignonette and sweet peas; and how, if father could be coaxed to make the furrows, mustard and cress and radishes were sure to grow in some pretty form—heart-shaped, for instance, or like a star, or even spelling some chosen word. Oh! to possess a place where she, too, might sow those wonderful seeds, and watch them grow. The thought was rapture; but with it came the remembrance that not a handful of earth could be found in Broom Court, where their house boasted but the tiniest of backyards, and that bricked over in the most unpromising fashion.

Good-natured Mary suggested that her small cousin should take home some mould in a pot, and make a modest beginning in that way; but Kitty had an uncomfortable idea that her bustling mother might object to it as rubbish; and even in a hasty moment consign her landed property to the dust hole. Besides, there were no flowers ever seen in Broom Court; Kitty hardly believed they would grow there. "You see," she explained to Fanny, "it is all so different. The sky is gray instead of blue—the smoke spoils it; very often, too, there is a fog which makes us cough."

"Is there any other difference, I wonder?" said Mrs. Benson.

"Yes," replied the little girl after a pause. "It is all different—it is not such a happy place as this. Mother gets tired and cross, and we children get cross, too.