

beyond call, then our bliss was complete. How carefully and patronizingly I helped her up the loose, mossy, stone wall, all hedged with a wilderness of golden-rod, ferns, raspberry bushes, and asters! Down we went through this tangled thicket, into such a secure world of joy, where the daisied meadow received us to her motherly bosom, and we were sure nobody could see us.

We could sit down and look upward, and see daisies and grasses nodding and bobbing over our heads, hiding us as completely as two young grass birds: and it was such fun to think that nobody could find out where we were! Two bob-o-links, who had a nest somewhere in that lot, used to mount guard in an old apple tree, and sit on tall, bending twigs, and say, "Chack! chack! chack!" and flutter their black and white wings up and down, and burst into most elaborate and complicated babbles of melody. These were our only associates and witenesses. We thought that they knew us, and were glad to see us there, and wouldn't tell anybody where we were for the world. There was an exquisite pleasure to us in this sense of utter isolation—of being hid with each other where nobody could find us.

We had worlds of nice secrets peculiar to ourselves. Nobody but ourselves knew where the "thick spots" were, where the ripe, scarlet strawberries grew; the big boys never suspected them, we said to one another, nor the big girls; it was our own secret, which we kept between our own little selves. How we searched, and picked, and chatted, and oh'd and ah'd to each other, as we found wonderful places, where the strawberries passed all belief.

But profoundest of all our wonderful secrets were our discoveries in the region of animal life. We found, in a tuft of grass overshadowed by wild roses, a grass bird's nest. In vain did the cunning mother creep yards from the cherished spot, and then suddenly fly up in the wrong place; we were not to be deceived. Our busy hands parted the lace curtains of fern, and, with whispers of astonishment, we counted the little speckled, bluegreen eggs. How round and fine and exquisite, past all gems polished by art, they seemed; and what a mystery was the little curious smooth-lined nest in which we found them! We talked to the birds encouragingly, "Dear little birds," we said, "don't be afraid; nobody but we shall know it;" and then we said to each other, "Tom Halliday never shall find this out, nor Jim Fellows." They would carry off the eggs and tear up the nest; and our hearts swelled with such a responsibility for the tender secret, that it was all we could do that week to avoid telling it to everybody we met. We informed all the children at school that we knew something that they didn't—something that we *never* would tell!—something so wonderful!—something that it would be wicked to tell of—for mother said so; for be it observed that, like good children, we had taken our respective mothers into confidence, and received the strictest and most conscientious charges as to our duty to keep the bird's secret.

In that enchanted meadow of ours grew tall, yellow lilies, glowing as the sunset, hanging down their bells, six or seven in number, from high, graceful stalks, like bell towers of fairy land. They were over our heads sometimes, as they rose from the grass and daisies, and we