

she hadn't many flowers and was delighted with the bouquet I took her. She had promised me a slip of the white roses that badly needed prunin'.

I had almost forgot about Miss Davis again, till we heard her singin' some school-song with Minta, and she soon appeared lookin' so rosy and jolly. "Just the one to brighten up Lottie," I thought, and before long, I had said something of the kind, and they laughed so heartily over it, I believe it did make them better friends, for they were soon walkin' around with their arms round each other, and 'twasn't long before we were all in the strawberry patch, and we didn't leave it till time for Lottie to help get tea. The Deacon seemed quite pleased to see us, and admired my bouquet that Lottie had set on the table; but I was glad Miss Davis was so ready witted and good at keepin' conversation going. I couldn't help thinkin' "What a nice place for poor Mary Trim, (his sister-in-law) and her boy. The Deacon hasn't a son and 'twould be such company for the girls too. And Mary such a good hand at makin' pies and such like."

Well, when it come time to go home, the Deacon insisted on drivin' us. Miss Davis laughed and said she could run across the fields, but he said 'twas damp, and wouldn't be just proper, so she said no more, perhaps thinkin' of it that her way was part mine too. I persuaded Lottie and Minta to come too, for a drive, and gave them the fuschia and a geranium in flower, not thinkin' the Deacon might take encouragement from it till I saw how pleased he was. I had asked Lottie to drop in sometimes and see me and so, bein' a timid a likin' company, she took to callin' for me to go to Sunday school, and sometimes she and Minta walked down from church with me and the Deacon would stop and take them up as he passed. And so we got quite friends and people sometimes smiled as I passed with Lottie on my arm, but I didn't mind it, for some of the rest of my class begun to come too. If anyone tried a joke with me I turned it pretty sharply without lettin' them know I took the hint, and so no harm was done. I didn't mean to go out again, but Lottie coaxed so hard for me to come out in cherry time, and as the minister and his wife were goin' out I managed to go with them. We had a real nice time and I promised to go out again to show Lottie how to do a quilt. Somehow I couldn't refuse, especially as she said she couldn't have regular quiltin'. When we was drivin' home the minister began jokin me about bein' a deaconess and I up and told him I didn't believe in woman deacons, and he said, "Not unless they marry deacons."

I said, "When I marry a deacon you'll know it." He hoped he would, so I told him he was fishin' for fees.

Well, 'twasn't long before the deacon was obliged to be away on business, and Lottie asked me to go out and stay with her. I'd just been gettin' some hints I didn't like, and had a little collectin' to do, so I asked her if she hadn't better ask her aunt Marion. Poor child! I was sorry for her right off. "Why Miss Benjamin, I couldn't, father hasn't spoke to her for five years,—and—and I'd rather not."

So I promised at once to stay as long as I could, and supposed Miss Davis would stay at night when I couldn't. You see I'd no right to say a word against her father to her, and Lottie seemed so grateful, but I meant to "hide my time." I found out the deacon was goin' at noon, so I walked out in the cool of the afternoon. Miss Davis run over after tea and was persuaded to stay all night. After breakfast we got out the quilt, and I made myself quite at home, and told Lottie not to make company of me, and I worked hard at it all day. The girls helped me some, and so we got on pretty yell. I was afraid the Deacon might come home that night or early next morning, and as Miss Davis had promised to come over to tea, I hoped to get off.

But she sent word she couldn't come, and about teatime down came the rain, so that settled it. Next morning it was no better, and so I got at the quilt, and right at dinner-time in came the Deacon.

Of course, he insisted on me stayin' till the rain stopped, and then would drive me home. I mistrusted what was comin' and was not at all surprised when he up and told me in his matter-of-fact way, that he thought I'd make the best step-mother for Lottie, and he'd long ago made up his mind if I was willin'. Then I spoke my mind, and I says, "Why don't you ask your brother's widow, Marion Trim, to go and keep house for you? She's poor and would be glad of a situation, and you couldn't find a more capable person." "Exceptin' yourself of course," he said.

"No, Deacon Trim, not exceptin' myself. And think what a help Willie would be on the farm."

He winced a little and said he'd think of it, if I was decided, and I told him I was. We'd just got to our gate, and Rev. Baker, (our minister) passed and made some remark about the rain.

After that I didn't go out to the Deacon's, though I made no difference with Lottie, and I always had some good excuse to offer her, and made her acquainted with some nice young girls of her own age.

One day early in the fall, I dropped in to see a sick child, and met my friend, Rev. Mrs. Baker. "Miss Benjamin," she began at once, "I want you to go with me to Deacon Trim's. I hear he is very ill."

"I'm sorry for that," I said. "Lottie was not at Sunday school, and I meant to call, but—"

"I'm surprised you've delayed then. Something must be done to help Lottie. Can you go with me this afternoon?"

I thought of Marion, but said nothing then. A neighbor-woman was there but couldn't stay, and the doctor said 'twas a serious case of fever, and required careful nursing. We stayed as long as we could for Lottie's sake, and drove home late in the evening. I couldn't forget poor Lottie's tired, pleading look, and says I, "Something must be done, Mrs. Baker." "Yes," she says. "It's a shame to have Lottie alone—besides it's dangerous! If anyone could take the responsibility and engage necessary help." "I know of no suitable person," I says.

"I didn't mean just that, you know, but I'm really anxious about the deacon, and believe it absolutely necessary that an older head than Lottie's should have the management. Pardon me, I don't mean to quiz, but would your connection with the family warrant your taking hold for awhile?"

"My connection?"

"Yes! if there's anything between you and the Deacon."

"But there ain't! Only that I've refused him!"

"Oh! I'm sorry you've refused. But what would you suggest?"

"Well," says I, as bold as a lion, "I'd just go right to Marion Trim, and ask her to go out there and stay."

Well, Marion agreed to go, if I'd go with her. So next morning Mr. Baker drove us out real early, and by night she was quite at home like and acquainted with the girls and the ways o' the house, and I came home with Doctor Reid.

Well, the Deacon kept pretty bad for several weeks, and Marion stayed right on and kept things quiet and orderly, and won a world o' praise for her nursin'. Deacon was out of his mind for a good part o' the time, and sometimes talked about his dead brother and sometimes about foreclosin' a mortgage, and talked of makin' it up to him, and wishin' he hadn't foreclosed. And then he seemed to remember he was dead, and said something about Marion and his brother's boy, but didn't know she was there.

Her Willie was staying at the miuister's and fetched their cow and run errands, but every day he was sent out to the farm, and sometimes stayed for hours huntin' eggs and doing what he could and the girls told me they wished the deacon'd let him stay always. Well, Deacon improved, and Marion talked of leavin' but Lottie wouldn't bear to it. So she kept out of his sight and stayed on till he was able to go out to the settin' room, then Mr. and Mrs. Baker arranged a little surprise party to welcome him like. There was just the family, and me and the doctor. And of course Marion and her boy, and Mr. and Mrs. Baker was there.

Well, he was surprised to see us all, and when Doctor Reid introduced Marion as the one that had saved his life, he pretty near fainted. Then the tears came into his eyes, and he shook hands with them both and said they should never want a home

while he lived; and then we all sung 'Thanksgivin' Hymns, and Marion almost cried, and everybody seemed thankful and happy.

I never heard anyone call the Deacon stingy after that, for he adopted Willie for his own, and Marion made her home with them.

Well, I never let 'em know that 'twas me that interfered, but when I see how happy and comfortable they all seem, I feel thankful that I'm still an old maid instead of Mrs. Deacon Trim.

To be Continued in our next.



## That Girl.

NEVER in all my life did see the like of that girl! I don't believe there's another of her sort in all California. I hope not, anyway!

Mrs. Fromer stood in the doorway of her rude little cabin and looked with interest and disapproval up the mountain road. There was nobody but little four-year-old Jerry for her to talk to, and he was too busy to pay any attention, but with the performances of "that girl" for a subject Mrs. Fromer must talk.

"There! Did anybody ever see anything to equal that? Why, she just got onto that dog's back and made him jump over that rock as if he was a horse. What in the world is she up to now? Well, I do declare."

Quite overcome by astonishment and dismay, the woman had to stop talking for a moment, and stood in breathless silence watching the strange goings on which had so upset her mind.

And no wonder, for the pranks she was witnessing were enough to make any woman with fixed ideas of propriety feel a little faint and giddy. It might be supposed that Mrs. Fromer would have become used to such pranks by this time, but she had not. Nobody did become used to them, it seemed. Consequently Hilo Mountain, although it was not a volcano, was always in a state of disturbance, because "that girl" was continually doing something extraordinary.

Just now, without knowing—or caring—that she had a spectator, she was rehearsing a sort of Wild West show in the rocky road a little way above the Fromer house. There were only two performers—herself and the immense dog she always had with her—but they were so active and versatile and made so much noise that they were more than satisfactory.

It was amusing to see the little midget—she was only thirteen and small for her age—playing Indian and scout, and stage driver, and giving a really good imitation of each. And she went at her fun with such spirit and enthusiasm that no looker on could help being excited in sympathy.

The dog, a great St. Bernard, was quite as enthusiastic as his mistress, and was full of the spirit of the occasion. It was evident that he saw no impropriety at all in this business. He gave it all the assistance in his power and was wonderfully intelligent in his performances.

Suddenly the girl stood upon the dog's back and balanced herself there with the skill of a monkey while the creature scampered up and down the road, leaped over rocks and did many other break-neck things. The girl held a stick in her hand, which she pretended was a gun, and at short intervals she "made believe" to fire the weapon, giving at the same time an Indian whoop.

It was this feature of the show that had caused Mrs. Fromer to exclaim and to hold her breath. It had also attracted the attention of little Jerry Fromer. At once the child was filled with admiration, and ran out into the road to join the fascinating party.

His mother caught and brought him back, not without loud protests on his part. The girl heard his outcries and understood them. She came racing to the house door in the hope of securing another playfellow.

"Let me have him just a little while!"