

horny tail,—a happy provision of Nature for handling the cross-grained creature. Then they opened the sand and counted their treasure of eggs, and, covering them up wet and fresh, went blissfully back to Marty to tell her how beautiful it all was, and what a red-hot temper the old torop had.

It was close upon midsummer now, and the long-desired party seemed no nearer than at first, for Aunt Dolly was down with the chills, and Marty making up the deficiency by working every day at the house. But one Friday night at dusk, when the last plate was washed and put away, and Marty was slowly wiping the sapsuds from her tired hands, there came a flying scout through the twilight, dispatched from Hannah's in hot haste, with momentous information.

But the news was too prostrating to be borne alone, even by all-enduring Marty, and she came softly tapping at mother's door.

"Mis' Calvert's gwine to be surprised now, I reckon," she said very gently, "fer I'm beat myself,—the beatest I ever was yit. They 'so come."

"Who has come?" asked mother.

"All on 'em; all my pay-party, that I was gwine to have along towards fall," rejoined Marty, placidly. "Said they heerd 'twas gwine to be to-night, and we hain't gin out, nor nothin'."

"They should not have come without a definite invitation," said mother, rather indignantly. "They must go home again."

"Yas'm. Mother Honner let 'em know we hadn't no notion of havin' it; but they said they heerd it was to be, and they couldn't come so fur fer nothin', and we'd got to have it whedder or no. There's a big wagon-load chock full, from Tuckappos, and they say they left the Squaw Neck folks walkin' over, 'bout half a mile back."

"How could they possibly hear such a thing, Marty?"

"Wal, they knew we was gwine to have it some time or 'nother, when things got settled, and I reckon Ed must 'a' ben talkin' about that torop; he sets 'mazin' by it, and Mis' Calvert knows Ed's such a pleasant boy to talk, 'specially when he's a little out of the way."

"Very well," said mother in righteous wrath, "let him exercise his gift to-night then, and amuse his company. They have chosen to come without an invitation, now let them stay without any entertainment, and go home as soon as they choose."

"Yas'm. Mis' Calvert don't think that's kind of unsociable, eh, Mis' Calvert?"

Mother laughed in spite of herself. "I'm sure I don't know, Marty. Manage it yourself. What are you going to do?"

"Reckoned I'd ask Caesar to take 'em out sailin' a couple of hours. Caesar's a mortal clever boy, and them Tuckapposers is dead sot on sailin'. Think 's likely they'll git aground comin' back. Tide'll be cl'ar down by that time. Ed can kill the torop,—I 'count it a 'mazin' marey we got that torop, mistes,—and then row up to the store and git the goodies to set out and sell; and me and Ann and Mother Honner'll git 'em a good tea agin they come back. Mis' Calvert think that's a good way to fix it?"

"Yes, as good as can be, Marty; and now, how can I help you?"

"If Mis' Calvert felt willin' to have the big oven het up, and to sell me a little butter and flour and sugar, and that big dish of beans and bacon I got ready fer to-morrow, I'd git along bitiful."

"Very well, Marty, I'm quite willing."

So the materials were gathered together and weighed out; the great oven was soon roaring with internal fires; Aunt Dolly being in the debatable land between a fever and a chill, and much revived also with the prospect of a party, rose from her bed to make Marty a big batch of her famous soda biscuit and card gingerbread, and afterward went to the feast to help eat it. The willing guests were sent out sailing, and verified Marty's hopeful anticipations, for they ran aground on the south flat, coming into the cove, and were held fast till eleven o'clock or after, when the tide turned and set them afloat once more. What with poling round into the right position, dropping sail and heaving anchor, and leisurely landing a few at a time in the follow-boat, it was almost midnight when they reached the shore.

Here all things had gone on prosperously. The fire had promptly and dutifully begun to burn the stick, the stick had begun to heat the oven, the oven had begun to bake the cake and biscuit and beans and bacon; and all of these had come in the fullness of time to a beautiful brown, and had been carried to Mother Honner's in the clothes-basket. There they adorned the table in company with the sumptuous turtle stew and minor comestibles, and sent savory smells into the contented nostrils of the hungry guests. Ed had returned in good season with his "store-nuts," candies, and root-beer, and sat behind his stand in the corner, pouring out his heart

to the crowd with the most affectionate loquacity. Caesar took the entrance-fee at the door, and the women served. After supper Ed and 'Lias furnished the music and the dancing began. The baby had been early dosed with Godfrey's Cordial and stowed away in a basket in the loft; but long-suffering Sammy came to the party as he had been promised, and sat up late and had goodies, till he rolled over with sleep and repletion, collapsed into a shapeless lump, and was finally hoisted into the loft with the baby and the other superfluous articles.

It is not every day that the Tuckappos and Squaw Neck people go to a party, it is not so frequent a pleasure that they can afford to let it slip too quickly through their fingers. A bird in the hand is enjoyed only so long as he remains there. So the moon sank away in the west, and the eternal stars shone calmly on, and the rosy, innocent dawn flushed up in the east and faded, and the kingly sun came regally up over the sea, and still wassail prevailed on the face of the earth.

Marty came wearily back to the house at late breakfast time, dragging the drowsy baby in her own tired arms, for Ed and Sammy were still accepting Mother Honner's somewhat reluctant hospitality. Marty was exceedingly meek and silent that day, and once in a while big tears filled her patient eyes and rolled slowly down her cheeks. The day after a late party is apt to be an aching void, even for those who have the fun, and Marty's share of the affair had been only toil and weariness. She looked so forlorn toward evening, that mother bade her go to bed and sleep off her fatigue.

"Don't 'pear to be sleepy, thank ye, mistes," said Marty; "my head's so chock full of them accounts. What we owe Mis' Calvert, and what we owe to the store, and what we borrowed of Mother Honner."

"How did the party go off, Marty?"

"Wal,—it went off,—yas'm," said Marty.

"Did you make as much as you expected?"

Marty's lip trembled, and the tears dropped as she shook her head slowly.

"It's a kind o' s'cumventin' world, Mis' Calvert, don't Mis' Calvert think so? Ed an't much of a hand to sell things, Ed an't; he's such a pleasant boy; he gin away a sight o' goodies to the chillen, and the old folks, they hommered him down reel lively on his prices. Old Jed, he let the tongs fall right on to Mother Honner's big yaller puddin' dish, that sot on the hairth keeping the torop warm, and that'll be forty cents, I 'spect. And then countin' what we owe to the store, and what we owe Mis' Calvert"—

"Never mind that, Marty, let it go as my contribution toward the party."

"Wal, now, thank ye, Mis' Calvert! that h'ists a big weight off my mind! Mis' Calvert's reel clever to us; she allers is; that makes things better; and now, if we don't have to pay more'n forty cents for the dish, and if Bruce and his wife pay us what they owe us,—didn't have no change last night,—and if Ruth Jake ever sends along the half-price for her fambly,—she said a widder with three chillen ought to git in free, all on 'em; she reckoned it warn't accordin' to Scripser to take the widder's mite, but sein' 'twas us, she'd try to pay half-price bumbye when she sells her baskets,—and if there an't nothin' more broke than I know on, I reckon now, we'll cl'ar one dollar and fifteen cents."

"Oh, Marty! poor child! I know how disappointed you are! Why, you've been thinking of this all summer!"

"I have so, mistes," responded Marty with deep humility, "but I 'spect it's the Lord's will. I allers was a ugly-tempered critter from when I was a baby. Mammy used to tell me I was the sassiest girl she had, and I'd got to git my spirit broke afore I died. So I 'spect it's the Lord's will, Mis' Calvert, for my heart *was* sot on to them shingles, powerful sot, and I'd ben a prayin' to him so much about 'em that I kind o' felt as if he'd noticed our roof hisself, and seen how much it wanted fixin'. Not that I want to fret, Mis' Calvert mustn't think it—me, with so many marcies, such a clever mistes, and Ed such a pleasant boy, too. The frost and the snow are his'n; and if it's his will they should fall on our heads next winter the way they did last, why, I reckon we can stan' it, and next summer mebbe we'll try another pay-party and have better luck."

This was the melancholy end of Marty's long-projected comedy, but there followed a little epilogue of a more cheerful nature.

Cousin Mary told the story of the pay-party in her witty little way, at a dinner given by the General soon after her return to Annapolis; and Colonel Barton proposed that all the guests who cared to partake of the fruit should deposit an equivalent in the fruit-basket for what they took out of it, for Marty's benefit.