

a golden crown, and on her extended hand they saw the ring that had been on the paw of the Jewelled Cat, but the cat they never saw again.

Without waiting one idle moment, the crowned lady grasped a hand of each child, and hurried along the route which the cat had taken when she mewed for them to follow. And they were none too soon, for the blazing faggot was being thrust piecemeal through the grating, and the flames, which were unlike any that we know, seemed to spread and roar hungrily and follow them. The cave was small, and escape seemed impossible, when the lady, suddenly letting go their hands, felt on the rough wall as though she sought something, and the children saw then that she held the key, which the cat had taken from them.

"Is it a keyhole you seek, Madam?" asked Poppie. "Is this it?"

"And sure enough it was, and one turn of the magical key changed the whole appearance of the wall in a moment. An opening became visible, and passing through this, they found a stairway, up which they clambered in breathless haste, never pausing until they emerged at the top, and found themselves in the open pasture field where Doris had gathered mushrooms. If anyone had been about, it would of course have seemed very extraordinary to see three people ascend out of the earth, and it might have got into the newspapers, but there was no living thing there except the cows and sheep, and they only blinked their eyes for a moment and said to each other :

"What will human beings do next? This is almost as strange as the way they cut the horses' tails."

And the beautiful lady said :

"It is very satisfactory, no one being about. There is nothing I dislike so much as publicity."