

# UNDER THE LILACS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *A MYSTERIOUS DOG.*

THE elm-tree avenue was all overgrown, the great gate was never unlocked, and the old house had been shut up for several years. Yet voices were heard about the place, the lilacs nodded over the high wall as if they said, "We could tell fine secrets if we chose," and the mullein outside the gate made haste to reach the keyhole, that it might peep in and see what was going on.

If it had suddenly grown up like a magic beanstalk, and looked in on a certain June day, it would have seen a droll but pleasant sight, for somebody evidently was going to have a party.

From the gate to the porch went a wide walk, paved with smooth slabs of dark stone, and bordered with the tall bushes which met overhead, making a green roof. All sorts of neglected flowers and wild weeds grew between their stems, covering the walls of this summer parlor with the prettiest tapestry. A board, propped on two blocks of wood, stood in the middle of the walk, covered with a little plaid shawl much the worse for wear, and on it a miniature tea-service was set forth