



THE HIGHEST HOUSE IN THE WORLD: THE MONT BLANC OBSERVATORY.

AN OBSERVATORY ON MONT BLANC.

M. Janssen, a distinguished French astronomer, is superintending the construction of an observatory at the top of the highest peak of Mont Blanc. The building was first set up at Meudon to make sure that it was perfect, and last spring it was taken apart, the pieces were carefully numbered, and the material for the new observatory was carried up to the top of Mont Blanc on the backs of porters. Not all the material has yet reached the final stage, but some of it is 15,000 feet above the sea-level, and the rest 10,000 feet. Work was suspended, of course, at the beginning of winter, but it will begin again in the spring, and if all goes well the observatory will be finished by October of this year. The cut shows the present stage of construction.

There are some queer things about this observatory aside from its elevation. Its dome will be made of aluminium; and its promoter, besides being seventy years old, is a cripple, and has to be dragged up the mountain in a chair of his own invention. Consequently the journeys are accomplished at considerable personal risk to the astronomer. M. Janssen was one of those who escaped from Paris in a balloon during the siege. In this exciting aerial trip, which ended by the sea-shore near Nantes, he carried with him, carefully packed, a great telescope which he had had specially constructed for him.

TIMOTHY'S QUEST.

BY KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

SCENE XVI.

The New Homestead.

TIMOTHY'S QUEST IS ENDED, AND SAMANTHA SAYS "COME ALONG DAVE!"

"Jabe Slocum! Do you know it's goin' n seven o'clock 'n' not a single chore done?"

Jabe yawned, turned over, and listened to Samantha's unwelcome voice, which (considerably louder than the voice of conscience) came from the outside world to disturb his delicious morning slumbers.

"Jabe Slocum! Do you hear me?"

"Hear you? Gorry! you'd wake the seven sleepers if they was any whar within ear-shot!"

"Well, will you git up?"

"Yes, I'll git up if you're goin' to hev a brash 'bout it, but I wish you hedn't waked me so awful sudent. 'Don't ontwist the mornin' glory' 's my motto. Wait a spell 'n' the sun 'll do it, 'n' save a heap o' wear 'n' tear besides. Go 'long! I'll get up."

"I've heerd that story afore, 'n' I won't go 'long tell I hear you footstep on the floor."

"Scoot! I tell yer I'll be out in a jiffy."

"Yes, I think I see yer. Your jiffies are consid'able like golden opportunities, there ain't more 'n one of 'em in a lifetime!" and having shot this Parthian arrow Samantha departed, as one having done her duty in that humble sphere of action to which it had pleased Providence to call her.

These were beautiful autumn days at the White Farm. The orchards were gleaming, the grapes hung purple on the vines, and

the odor of ripening fruit was in the hazy air. The pink spirea had cast its feathery petals by the gray stone walls, but the welcome golden-rod bloomed in royal profusion along the brown waysides, and a crimson leaf hung here and there in the tree-tops, just to give a hint of the fall styles in color. Heaps of yellow pumpkins and squashes lay in the corners of the fields; cornstalks bowed their heads beneath the weight of ripened ears; beans threatened to burst through their yellow pods; the sound of the threshing machine was heard in the land; and the "hull univarse wanted to be waited on to once," according to Jabe Slocum; for, as he affirmed, "Yer couldn't ketch up with your work nohow, for if yer set up nights 'n' worked Sundays, the craps 'd ripen 'n' go to seed on yer 'fore yer could git 'em harvested!"

And if there was peace and plenty without there was quite as much within doors.

"I can't hardly tell what's the matter with me these days," said Samantha Ann to Miss Vilda, as they sat peeling and slicing apples for drying. "My heart has felt like a stun these last years, and now all to once it's so soft I'm ashamed of it. Seems to me there never was such a summer! The hay never smelt so sweet, the birds never sang so well, the currants never jellied so hard! Why I can't kick the cat, though she's more everlastin'ly under foot 'n ever, 'n' pretty soon I shan't have sprawl enough to jaw Jabe Slocum. I b'lieve it's nothin' in the world but them children! They keep a runnin' after me, 'n' it's dear Samantha here, 'n' dear Samantha there, jest as if I warn't a homely old maid; 'n' they take holt o' my hands on both sides o' me, 'n' won't stir a step tell I go to see the chickens with 'em, 'n' the pig, 'n' one thing 'n' nother, 'n' clappin' their hands when I make 'em gingerbread men! And that reminds me, I see the school-teacher goin' down along this mornin' 'n' I run out to see how Timothy was gittin' along in his studies. She says he's the most extraordinary scholar in this deestrick. She says he takes holt of every book she gives him jest as if 'twas reviewin' 'stid o' the first time over. She says when he speaks pieces, Friday afternoons, all the rest o' the young ones set there with their jaws hangin', 'n' some of 'em laughin' 'n' cryin' 't the same time. She says we'd oughter see some of his comp'sitions, 'n' she'll show us some as soon as she gits 'em back from her beau that works at the Waterbury Watch Factory, and they're goin' to be married 's quick as she gits money enough saved up to buy her weddin' close; 'n' I told her not to put it off too long or she'd hev her close on her hands, 'stid o' her back. She says Timothy's at the head of the hull class, but, land! there ain't a boy in it that knows enough to git his close on right sid' out. She's a splendid teacher, Miss Boothby is! She tell me the seeleek men hev raised her pay to four dollars a week 'n' she to board herself, 'n' she's wuth every cent of it. I like to see folks well paid that's got the patience to set in doors 'n' cram information inter young ones that don't care no more 'bout learnin' 'n' a shunk-blackbird. She give me Timothy's writin' book for you to see what he writ in it yesterday, 'n' she hed to keep him in 't recess 'cause he didn't copy 'Go to the ant thou sluggard and be wise,' as he'd oughter. Now let's see what 'tis. My grief! it's

poetry sure's you're born. I can tell it in a minute 'cause it don't come out to the aidge o' the book one side or the other. Read it out loud, Vildy."

"Oh! the White Farm and the White Farm!
I love it with all my heart;
And I'm to live at the White Farm,
Till death it do us part."

Miss Vilda lifted her head, intoxicated with the melody she had evoked. "Did you ever hear anything like that," she exclaimed proudly.

"Oh! the White Farm and the White Farm!
I love it with all my heart;
And I'm to live at the White Farm,
Till death it do us part."

"Just hear the sentiment of it, and the way it sings along like a tune. I'm goin' to show that to the minister this very night, and that boy's got to have the best education there is to be had if we have to mortgage the farm."

Samantha Ann was right. The old homestead wore a new aspect these days, and a love of all things seemed to have crept into the hearts of its inmates, as if some beneficent fairy of a spider were spinning a web of tenderness all about the house, or as if a soft light had dawned in the midst of great darkness and was gradually brightening into the perfect day.

In the midst of this new-found gladness and the sweet cares that grew and multiplied as the busy days went on, Samantha's appetite for happiness grew by what it fed upon, so that before long she was a little unhappy that other people (some more than others) were not as happy as she; and Aunt Hitty was heard to say at the sewing-circle (which had facilities for gathering and disseminating news infinitely superior to those of the Associated Press), that Samantha Ann Ripley looked so peart and young this summer, Dave Milliken had better spunk up and try again.

But, alas! the younger and fresher and happier Samantha looked, the older and sadder and meeker David appeared, till all hopes of his "spunking up" died out of the village heart; and, it might as well be stated, out of Samantha's also. She always thought about it at sundown, for it was at sundown that all their quarrels and reconciliations had taken place, inasmuch as it was the only leisure time for week-day courting at Pleasant River.

It was sundown now; Miss Vilda and Jabez Slocum had gone to Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, and Samantha was looking for Timothy to go to the store with her on some household errands. She had seen the children go into the garden a half hour before, Timothy walking gravely, with his book before him, Gay blowing over the grass like a feather, and so she walked towards the summer-house.

Timothy was not there, but little Lady Gay was having a party all to herself, and the scene was such a pretty one that Samantha stooped behind the lattice and listened.

There was a table spread for four, with bits of broken china and shells for dishes, and pieces of apple and gingerbread for the feast. There were several dolls present (notably one without any head, who was not likely to shine at a dinner party), but Gay's first-born sat in her lap; and only a mother could have gazed upon such a battered thing and loved it. For Gay took her pleasures mildly, and this faithful creature had shared them all; but not having inherited her mother's somewhat rare recuperative powers, she was now fit only for a free bed in a hospital,—a state of mind and body which she did not in the least endeavor to conceal. One of her shoe-button eyes dangled by a linen thread in a blood-curdling sort of a way; her nose, which had been a pink glass bead, was now a mere spot, ambiguously located. Her red worsted lips were sadly ravelled, but that she did not regret, "for it was kissin' as done it." Her yarn hair was attached to her head with safety-pins, and her internal organs intruded themselves on the public through a gaping wound in the side. Never mind! if you have any curiosity to measure the strength of the ideal, watch a child with her oldest doll. Rags sat at the head of the dinner-table, and had taken the precaution to get the headless doll on his right, with a view to eating her gingerbread as well as his own,—doing no violence to the proprietries in this way, but rather concealing her defects from a gaping public.

"I tell you sompfn' little Mit Vildy Tummins," Gay was saying to her battered offspring. "You's doin' to have a new little sit-ter to-morrowday, if you's a dood little dirl an does to seep nite an kick, you-ser-weet little Vildy Tummins!" (All this punctuated with ardent squeezes fraught with delicious agony to one who had a wound in her side!) "Vay fink you's worn out, 'weety, but we know you isn't, don' we, 'weety? An I'll tell you nite little tory to-night, tause you isn't seepy. Wunt there was a little day hen 'at tole a net an' laid fir-teen waw' edds in it, an bime bye erleven or seventeen little chits f'ew out of 'em, an Mit Vildy 'dopted 'em all! In't that a nite tory, you ser-weet little Mit Vildy Tummins?"

Samantha hardly knew why the tears should spring to her eyes as she watched the dinner party,—unless it was because we can scarcely look at little children in their unconscious play without a sort of sadness, partly of pity and partly of envy, and of longing too, as for something lost and gone. And Samantha could look back to the time when she had sat at little tables set with bits of broken china, yes, in this very summer-house, and little Martha was always so gay, and David used to laugh so! "But there was no use in tryin' to make folks any difrent, 'specially if they was such nat'ral born fools they couldn't see a hole in a grinstun 'thout hev'in' it hung on their noses!" and with these large and charitable views of human nature, Samantha walked back to the gate, and met Timothy as he came out of the orchard. She knew then what he had been doing. The boy had certain quaint thoughts and ways that were at once a revelation and an inspiration to these two plain women, and one of them was this: To step softly into the side orchard on pleasant evenings, and without a word, before or afterwards, to lay a nose-gay on Martha's little white doorplate. And if Miss Vilda chanced to be at the window he would give her a quiet little smile, as much as to say, "We have no need of words, we two!" And Vilda, like one of old, hid all these doings in her heart of hearts, and loved the boy with a love passing knowledge.

Samantha and Timothy walked down the hill to the store. Yes, David Milliken was sitting all alone on the loafer's bench at the door, and why wasn't he at prayer-meetin' where he ought to be? She was glad she chanced to have on her clean purple calico, and that Timothy had insisted on putting a pink Ma'thy Washington geranium in her collar, for it was just as well to make folks' mouth water whether they had sense enough to eat or not.

"Who is that sorry-looking man that always sits on the bench at the store, Samantha?"

"That's Dave Milliken."

"Why does he look so sorry, Samantha?"

"Oh, he's alright. He likes it fust-rate, wearin' out that hard bench settin' on it night in 'n' night out, like a bump on a log! But, there, Timothy, I've gone 'n' forgot the whole pepper, 'n' we're goin' to pickle seed cowcumpers to-morrer. You take the lard home 'n' put it in the cold room, in' ondress Gay 'n' git her to bed, for I've got to call int' Mis' Mayhew's goin' along back."

It was very vexatious to be obliged to pass David Milliken a second time; "though there warn't no sign that he cared anything about it one way or 'nother, bein' blind as a bat, 'n' deaf as an adder, 'n' dumb as a fish, 'n' settin' stockstill there with no coat on, 'n' the wind blowin' up for rain, 'n' four o' the Millikens layin' in the churchyard with gallopin' consumption. "It was in this frame of mind that she purchased the whole pepper, which she could have eaten at that moment as calmly as if it had been marrow-fat peas; and in this frame of mind she might have continued to the end of time had it not been for one of those unconsidered trifles that move the world when even the great forces have given up trying. As she came out of the store and passed David, her eye fell on a patch in the flannel shirt that covered his bent shoulders. The shirt was gray and (oh, the pity of it!) the patch was red; and it was laid forlornly on outside, and held by straggling stitches of carpet thread put on by patient, clumsy fingers. That patch had an irresistible pathos for a woman!

Samantha Ann Ripley never exactly