

"A hank of blossoms, a yarn pelisse, and a pattern of crab-apples." Perhaps the good grandfather was slightly absent-minded himself on some occasions.

Elizabeth stood gazing after the horse and its rider until they vanished round the curve in the road by the great oak tree. Then she turned and glanced across the stream towards the mill. The miller was leaning out of the upper half of the mill-door, his arms resting on the lower half.

"The top of the morning to you, Miss Elizabeth," he called out. "Do you know, I've found the nest of the old goose I've been hunting so long. It was in the crotch of a willow at the lower end of the dam. Step over and take a look at it."

Elizabeth was about to trip lightly across the bridge that led to the mill, when she was hailed by a voice from the kitchen, reminding her that life is not all play, even on a merry May morning.

"Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" cried the grandmother, "there is a large ironing to do, and we are late at setting about it. Come, little idler, to your task."

"But it's such a lovely day," sighed the girl, slowly entering the room, and casting many a longing glance backward, silently wishing that she were a bird or a leaf that could let the rain do its washing and leave the smoothing process to the wind and sunshine. "But if I am diligent this morning, grandmother, I suppose that I may go into town this afternoon to see Mary Anne."

"Yes, yes, child; but now we must make haste, or else noon will be here before we have finished all that we have on hand," responded the grandmother, laying generous batches of dough into the bread-baskets to rise and make ready for baking.

When the clock struck twelve the last piece of snowy linen was hung up to air on the line stretched across the kitchen, and when the traces of the midday meal were cleared away, Elizabeth tied on her sunbonnet and started for the village. Of course, she had to pause for a moment at the spring, for she could never pass it by unheeded; but a little later she was with her cousins in an old garden, sleepy with sunshine and fragrant with blossoms.

What with gossiping over Elizabeth's coming flight from the home nest and the relating of stories by Mary Anne from a delightfully fascinating book that she had come across—but which her mother had withdrawn from her ere she had fathomed half of its fascinations—the afternoon skipped by all too quickly.

Elizabeth suddenly realized the lateness of the hour, and hastened away, but it was growing dark as she pressed into the shade of the pine woods beyond the spring, and she was considerably startled when she observed in the path ahead of her the figure of an unknown man, who, when he heard the approaching footsteps, dodged behind the trunk of a tree, as though fearful of a discovery.

"Dear me," thought Elizabeth, "who is that? It must be a beggar or a tramp, unless it is a king or a lord in disguise. Anyway, it's best to avoid him. There, he has turned off to the right, so I'll hurry along as fast as I can."

In another moment she saw her grandmother coming to meet her. Elizabeth threw her arms round the old lady's neck in an ecstasy of joy and relief, and confided the story of her vision and her fright. Grandmother looked a little worried.

"I almost wish you had brought William home with you to spend the night," she said, as she latched the garden gate behind herself and Elizabeth. "Woolly says that there is a fox prowling round also. You must shut up the chickens with more than usual caution. David went away for the afternoon, too, and will not be back until late this evening. Do you run over, Elizabeth, and see that the geese are in the pen near the house, lest they be in peril, and drop a word to his wife, poor lame Susan, to charge David to keep his ears open for anyone who may be abroad to-night. However, I think that we have really little to fear. The stranger was probably a traveler going through the country on foot."



"Don't Shoot."

Elizabeth flew away to do her grandmother's bidding; but, while securing the fowls from surprise, she fell to wondering about the man that she had encountered, and to weaving romances in her customary fashion, and not once did she recall to memory the orders

about the miller's geese. The moon was climbing the skies when she went upstairs to go to bed, and when she walked to the window for a parting glimpse of the world without, she fancied that she beheld a man slink across the road and hide himself in the woods beyond.

"It's just nervousness that makes me imagine that I find strange things everywhere now," she assured herself to stifle a little spasm of alarm, and, with a light laugh at her own notions, she sprang into bed, and had soon lost herself and her troubles in dreamland. But after an hour or two of sleep she was called back to real life. She awoke suddenly to descry somebody standing by her window.

"Who's there?" she demanded, in quavering tones.

"It is I," replied her grandmother, in a whisper. "I heard the sound of whistling, and I stole in here to peer out on this side of the house, and here is a man walking up and down the road. He is trying, perhaps, to find out if there is a man about, or else wishes to signal to some accomplice. There, do you hear him?"


Elizabeth was at the window in a trice, and she could plainly discern a tall figure creeping stealthily in through the gate.

"Oh, why was I so foolish as to stay here without a man," said grandmother, catching her breath. "We cannot protect ourselves, and there is one shutter in the parlor that is not closed, because the white rose-bush has grown in so far that it holds it open. There, he is at the other window now, and will soon make an attempt at the one behind the rose-bush."

Grandmother had in her hand a small calico bag, which she tucked beneath the mattress of the bed, and then she began to push some of the heavy, old-fashioned mahogany furniture against the door of the room.

"Woolly is safe enough in her corner in the attic," said grandmother, "but we must have something that the rascal is after. I will fling up the window, and we must scream for help. David must have returned by this time, and mayhap he will hear us, and come to our rescue. You spoke to Susan of this matter, did you not, Elizabeth?"


Elizabeth flushed scarlet, and let her head fall upon her breast, like a rose bending on its stalk.



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