

# The Box of Queer Things

ONCE upon a time, and not so long ago, either, there was a little white house with green blinds which stood on the edge of a wood.

Grandmother Gray wore a cap over her white curls, and her dress was of black silk, very full in the skirt, with an enormous pocket filled with all kinds of treasures.

She had two grandchildren, whose names were Lucy and Sarah. Lucy and Sarah lived a long way from their grandmother. Every pleasant Saturday they went to see her.

They walked slowly through the woods, stopping sometimes to play with the birds and often to rest, for they always carried a basket with a present. It was not always the same present. Sometimes they brought fruit or berries or eggs or custard, and, strange to say, the basket was never empty when they returned.

Grandmother Gray would put on her glasses just as they were about to leave, look at them to see if their faces

reached home. One is for Sarah and the other for you."

The squirrel was watching for her. The squirrel looked in the basket and said, "Do you know, I think they are boxes of nuts."

"You don't know anything about it," declared Lucy.

"No, of course I don't know," replied the squirrel. "How could I if you won't let me see? But I think they are boxes of nuts."

The squirrel chattered crossly and cried after her, "I hope they are nuts I hope they are nuts."

Lucy was much disturbed, for she wanted candy or a doll or a tea set. She sat down on the stump of a tree and kept saying, "I hope they are not nuts." Then she took one of the boxes up and opened it.

At first it seemed to be filled with colored candies, but in an instant these changed into little creatures, and, with a whirring noise, they flew at her.

She sprang up, spilling some on the ground. She started to run, but the



WITH A WHIRRING NOISE THEY FLEW AT HER.

were clean, and then say, "Let me see. Perhaps I have something in here that little girls would like."

Down in her pocket she would reach and, after searching, bring forth two boxes and, placing them in the basket, say, "Don't open these until you reach home."

One Saturday Sarah had the measles and could not go to her grandmother's. Lucy was allowed to go alone. "Be sure to come home early," said Lucy's mother as she started forth, "and mind that you do not break the eggs in the basket."

Lucy promised to be careful and walked into the woods. Before long she met the gray squirrel. "Hello," she called.

"Hello," cried the squirrel, not pausing.

"You seem to be in a hurry this morning," called Lucy, for the gray squirrel was usually very friendly.

"What's in it?" asked the squirrel, with great interest.

"Eggs," replied Lucy.

"I don't eat them," said the squirrel scornfully.

"My grandmother does," explained Lucy.

"How very important the squirrel is this morning!" said a voice. It was the black crow.

"He is busy today," answered Lucy.

"He is a lazy thing," said the crow; "all squirrels are. I see you have a basket."

"Yes," answered Lucy; "a basket of eggs for my grandmother."

"Did you ever take her any corn?" inquired the crow, putting its head on one side.

"No; my grandmother doesn't like corn," answered Lucy.

"How curious!" declared the crow, even more surprised.

Lucy found Grandmother Gray sitting at the window of the little house.

Soon after dinner her grandmother said, "Now, Lucy, you must start for home, for it is a long walk through the woods, and you are alone."

She handed Lucy the basket as she spoke. Lucy had reached the door when Grandmother Gray put on her glasses and said: "Let me see. Let me see. I think I have something in here for little girls." She put her hand in her pocket and brought forth two boxes alike in color and size. As she placed them in the basket she said: "Be sure not to open these before you

little creatures pursued her. She felt them attack her.

"I am a spank!" cried a wee voice.

"I am a pinch!" said another.

"I am a tickle!" said another.

"I am a scratch!" said still another.

They lighted on her hands and face and legs. As fast as she drove them from one place they would fly to another. She was so frightened that she ran through the woods crying. The birds heard the noise and screamed too.

The box cover was still off, letting more and more creatures escape. Lucy managed to clap the cover on as she ran, but it was some time before the pinches and scratches and tickles and spansks were driven off.

"What in the world is the matter?" inquired the black crow.

"I don't know," answered Lucy tearfully. "I thought it was candy, but when I opened the box spansks and pinches and scratches and tickles flew out at me."

The first thing her mother said when she entered the house was, "Why, Lucy, what has happened to you?"

Lucy did not reply. Just then Sarah called out to know what her grandmother had sent her in the basket. Trembling, Lucy handed Sarah her box. She ran quickly toward the door as Sarah started to open it. She was ready to run away if this was also filled with tiny creatures.

But Sarah opened it and found it full of beautiful colored candies. "Open your box and see if it is the same," asked Sarah.

Lucy was ashamed to tell she had disobeyed her grandmother, so she opened her box slowly, thinking there could be very few spansks left in it.

To her surprise, she found no pinches or scratches or tickles or spansks, but just one very small white peppermint candy.—New York World.

**A Stitch in Time.**

'Twas but a rusty little nail,  
And on it hangs this tale,  
For on it some one caught and tore  
The pretty new frock that she wore.  
But some one only tossed her head,  
'I'll mend it by and by,' she said.  
Another hour in play was spent,  
And then the tear was quite a rent.  
Alas, before the day had flown  
The rent into a hole had grown,  
So big that mother had to spend  
Quite half a day that hole to mend.  
And now that pretty frock she wore  
Is not so pretty as before.  
So recollect this rhyme of mine  
And that a stitch in time saves nine.

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