

FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL



Four Little Girls and Their Four Little Stories

BY JOAQUIN MILLER.

AWAY up on the middle fork of the one big and beautiful river of Oregon, wedged down deep between two great black mountains topped with trees and clouds and snow, a little log house nestled close by the bank of the foamy river, alive with shiny fishes. A narrow, shady road ran close by the door. Back of the house on the hillside was a clearing, set thick with apple-trees, peach-trees and the like, and loaded down; while the air was full of busy bees, and every one of the great dark trees up and down the steep mountains was musical with the song of birds.

Dot and Puss and Dimples and Pudge—these were the names of the four little girls who lived in the log house, but where they got their names no one but their father could tell.

It was ten miles through the thick woods to the next house; it was quite as far to their first neighbor in the other direction; and as this was a sort of stopping-place for the very few travelers who ventured on horseback over this portion of the Oregon Sierras, I drew rein at the door and shouted: "Hello the house!"

In a moment four little girls blossomed in the door—rosy, round-faced, brown-faced, sunny-haired, hearty, happy. Beautiful! They looked as if they might have escaped from the upper world and slid down the great snow-peaks to that little home by the beautiful river.

"Might I stay?" There was a welcome to the tired stranger in every "yes," as four pretty mouths opened in chorus.

Dot, the eldest, a strong, self-reliant little girl of ten years, led my horse to the stable across the road; Dimples led me into the cabin; Puss brought water from the spring; little Pudge brought her apron full of chips from the wood-pile in the back yard; and all four were soon busily preparing supper.

The father came home, a weary man, tall and strong, lonely-looking and very silent, and swung his gun and game-pouch on the great elk-horns over the fireplace.

We had supper by the firelight; Dot with her little hands kept piling on the pine knots till the gloomy little cabin was light as day.

After a hearty meal on wild meat, Indian corn, and fish, the little girls cleared off the table, and then grouped about it with their books. But no, they could not read. They wanted to hear about the great big world—the world that was to them like fairyland. I told them many wondrous things, the half-sad and very silent father sitting all the time back in the dark and alone.

By and by I asked them to tell me something of their books. And how learned they were. They knew much indeed of books. But their geography was mixed. All history, the "Arabian Nights," novels of all kinds, all these were jumbled in their little heads together. Yes, their mother, they said in whispers, as they glanced back at their father, had taught them ever so much. They had never seen a schoolhouse or a church. Once they had been to camp-meeting. Yes, mother—when she was a young woman—had come from a far-off country—from Boston,—had married, settled in the woods there, away from all the world, and, only last year, had died.

Seeing his children were now as sad as himself, as they thought of their mother, the man rose, came forward, kicked the fire till it blazed up more cheerfully, and suggested to the children that they should tell me some stories in return for mine.

"And oh, let's make 'em up ourselves!" shouted Puss, as she clapped her dimpled hands and hitched up her chair, as did all the others, with their elbows on the table and their bright faces all at once as merry as the May.

"Certainly," answered matron Dot, "we will make 'em up all by ourselves; and you shall tell the first; only don't put in any boggy-man or ghost or scare little Pudge." And with that Dot put an arm about Pudge and drew her close to her side; while Puss smoothed down her little gingham apron, hitched her chair again, and, clearing her throat, gravely began:

"Once upon a time in Arabia—in Arabia—where—where all the giants are born and brought up and educated, there was a great giant who had no castle. So this great giant—he got up and took his club and set out to walk and walk till he could find a great castle, where he could put people in and lock 'em up and—ahem—and eat 'em. Well, he walked and he walked—ahem. And he was barefooted and he had no shoes at all. And he was bareheaded and his hair was long—ahem, ahem. And he walked and he walked till he came to a great high mountain. And he went up to the top of that high mountain, for he thought it might have a castle on it. But he found there only a great big flat rock on the edge of a great steep precipice, with—ahem—with a railroad running along in the valley below. Yes, the—the—ahem—the Erie Railroad! Well, he lay down on the flat rock and went to sleep, and in the night he waked up and went down in the valley to get something to eat. For—like all great and good giants he was—ahem—always hungry. Well, he found a milkhouse, and he drank up all the pans of milk, and he ate up all the fresh butter,—ahem, and he couldn't find any bread, and he hurried back to his big flat rock on the mountain above the precipice, for he was getting very tired. And he lay down on his back on the big flat rock, with his hands a-holdin' tight on his head, for he felt—ahem—very queer. Well, by and by he heard a rumblin'—oh, such a rumblin'! And he was, oh, so certain his head was going to break open! And—ahem—

he held tight on to his head with both his big hands. Then he did n't hear any rumblin' any more, and all was still; and he went to sleep. Ahem! But by and by such another rumblin'—oh, such a rumblin' that it made the mountain shake! And he held so tight on to his head that he almost screamed out for pain. And then he listened. And then he began to laugh. And he let go of his head and he laughed and he laughed and he laughed. For what do you think it was that rumbled so? Why, it was n't his head at all. It was only the Erie Railroad. Yes—ahem—yes, and he laughed and he rolled and he rolled and he laughed till he rolled right over that precipice, and he fell—ahem—and fell a hundred thousand feet, and he landed with his neck in the fork of a tree, and—ahem—died! Yes. And if you can go to foreign countries and find the Erie Railroad, and find that precipice, and stop the train, and get off and measure how high that tree is, you can tell just how tall that giant was, for, for—ahem—for if his foot could have touched the ground he could have stood up, and it would n't have killed him, you see!

"Oh! oh, Puss!" "Oh, Puss!" cried Dot and Dimples.

"It's glad he's dead, anyhow, for I don't like giants," said little Pudge, as she nestled closer to Dot; and the father again came forward out of the dark and poked up the fire.

"And now, Dot, it's your turn," said Dimples, as she reached over and buried a hand in the cloud of yellow hair that nestled on Puss's shoulder.

"Yes; and I'll make it short, for Pudge has yawned twice. And remember, now, this is a story that has to be all told over again from the first if any one asks a single question. So don't one of you speak or I'll never get through to-night."

"Once upon a time in a far-off country there was a flock of sheep feeding on a sloping hillside above the sea. On the great black mountain back of them there was a forest of pines, and in this forest there were a hundred thousand bears."

"Oh, my! So many?"

"Once upon a time in a far-off country there was a flock of sheep feeding—"

"Please, please, sissier Dot, I won't speak any more," pleaded Pudge.

"Well, then, don't, Pudge, because, you see, every time anybody speaks I have to go right back to the beginning and tell it all over from the first. This is one of that kind of stories, you know. But I can go ahead this once. Well, the flock of sheep went sliding their noses along on the ground very fast, and a little lamb got very tired and lay down by the side of a rock—a gray rock, I think. Yes, it went to sleep, there, while its mother went on with the flock, with her nose on the ground, nibbling grass. After a while the lamb felt a cold nose moving up and down on the back of its neck, and thinking it was its kind, good mother who had come back with the flock on the way home, it lazily opened its eyes and looked up. And what do you think it saw? A great black bear!"

"Oh! And did it—?" But Pudge clapped both

chubby hands over the rosy mouth with its rows of pearl just in time; and with just a little from the story-teller went on.

"Guess I've got you," said the bear.

"Spec' you have," said the lamb. "But you better not eat me."

"And why had I better not eat you? Humph! Come, get ready to be eaten. I'm hungry."

"Oh, please, Mr. Bear," said the little lamb, "if you won't eat me I will take you to where there is a big Popwopsus. And if you have n't got enough after you eat the big Popwopsus you can eat me."

"And oh, Dot, what is a —?" Just in time Pudge got her two hands over her mouth, so the story did not quite have to be told over from the first.

"Now this was a very ignorant bear, and did not know what a Popwopsus was."

"No more do you, nor anybody else," chuckled Dimples aside to herself.

"But, like very ignorant people, it pretended to know a great deal, and said it was a bargain; and as the lamb gladly led the way up the hill to a great pine-tree, the bear muttered to himself that he could eat them both and not half try!"

"There you are, sir," said the lamb, pointing to a great high heap of gum that had oozed from the tree. "Help yourself."

"Now this bear thought this must be delicious food indeed; so, pretending to know all about it, he gruffly bowed his thanks to the lamb, and reaching up, he opened his great red mouth, threw his arms about the fat wax Popwopsus, and hugging it tight, greedily bit off its sticky head!

"Well, you should have seen that bear's mouth! And jaws! And feet! Gum! Gum! Nothing but gum!"

"And you should have seen that little lamb laugh! He just stuck his little fists in his little sides and



very foreign country," and here little Dimples stopped, rolled up her dimpled hands in her coarse apron as if they had been cocoons in silk, and began it all over again. She did this two or three times in her great embarrassment, and at last, after assuring us over and over again that it was in a very, very foreign country, and was very nearly crying with fright, she meekly held her head to one side and managed to go on. "Once upon a time, in a very foreign country, there lived in a great coal-

"Now the doctor told Old Leather Nose that the only way to cure him was to plant him in the ground in a deep hole up to the chin, under a great pine-tree up on a great high mountain, and keep him there, with only one pipe to smoke, till the sun rose in the morning.

"And so the doctor took ten men, and they carried Old Leather Nose from the Norwegian coal-mine up on a high mountain somewhere in Florida, where there are a great many ferocious walruses, and they planted him up to the beard, and gave him a pipe to smoke. Yes, and when they began to plant him he took off his leather nose and laid it carefully down on a chip by the side of—"

"And did it cure him all well, Dimples? Did it, Dimples?"

"Pudge, dear, the walruses came down in the night and ate his head off smooth with the ground. And that's all."

"Oh, how dreadful! My sakes alive! But he tum'd to life again! he tum'd to life again!—did n't he?"

"Yes, little Pudge, but that is another story. And don't go to sleep just yet. It's your turn now. Only a little one, dear, and then papa will put Pudge in her little trundle-bed."

"Once upon a time in a—in a—" And the little fists dug and doubled about the great, dreamy eyes, and tried to push away the mass of curls that curtained them, and with much effort the sleepy little girl got through with this little fragment of a story: "Once upon a time dey was mice an' mice an' mice, Oh, my, such a mice in a fur—furrin tuntry. An' a man he goed a fousand hundred miles to brin' a fousand hundred tats for to tatch 'em. An' he do an' he dit a wadon an' dey brin' him tats. An' dey brin' him a fousand hundred tats. An' he put 'em in a wadon, and he start for to do for to tatch 'em, mice. An' he tame by a house, an' de dog bark, an' de tats back up on de wadon look like a load o'hay. An—an—oh, my, I is so se'epy! An—an' he tame by a tamp-meetin'. An' de tamp-meetin' sin' er hymn; an' den er tats sin' a song, too. An' den er tamp-meetin' have to stop—an' den—an' den—er—"

And the little round face bowed down and buried itself in the folded arms on the table. The silent father came forward from his now very dark corner, and taking the little sleeper from her sister, placed her in the trundle-bed. In a few minutes one more was beside her, and two in the little bunk over the trundle-bed. The father and I were soon in bed in the adjoining room, with the door open between.

And when he thought I slept, he rose up softly, went into the other room, drew out the trundle-bed noiselessly, and kissed his four little motherless girls, with only God to see him. Then he stepped to the door, drew a great bolt across it, and, taking his rifle from the rack, set it in reach at his bedside, ready to defend his babes. And then we slept.



"AND YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT LITTLE LAMB LAUGH!"

danced up and down for delight.

"And the bear pawing at his own teeth! And gnawing at his paws! Oh, my! And he rolled over, and the leaves stuck fast, and he began to look as big as an elephant. And so the lamb pitied him and said:

"Come, I'll take you back to where I found you." And so he went back down the hill, and the poor bear hobbled and rolled on after.

"But pretty soon they met the sheep. Then a big ram with great bent horns bowed to the bear. And the bear thought it was all right. But, I tell you, whenever a ram bows to you, look out! Well, the rams all bowed to that bear, and then they began to come. Jump! Bump! Thump! And over that bear went, heels over head, till he rolled into the sea and was turned into a great big island that was all surrounded by water."

"Oh, my! Who ever heard a lamb talk! Now I don't b'lieve that 'o'ther story, too!" said Pudge.

"Pudgey, Pudgey! But now Dimples; and then little Pudge."

"Once upon a time in a foreign country a—very,

mine a man with a leather nose. Now this man was a Norwegian, and he had a name that was so long that it took a man a day and a half to pronounce it, and—"

"Now, Dimples! Oh, Dimples!"

"Well, Dot, I'll pronounce it if you like. It may not take a day and a half, but it will take some time."

"Skip the name, then, and hurry up, for Pudge is very sleepy."

"Well, then, they called him Old Leather Nose. And whenever anybody called him Old Leather Nose there was a fight; for he was very, very sensitive on that point. Now this was in California.

"After a while he got sick; and the doctor, who was afraid of him and wanted to get him out of the way, told him he had a certain kind of disease. And it was a Latin disease that was even harder to pronounce and longer than his name; so we will skip the Latin disease, although I know it and can pronounce it very well, sister Dot.

THE PORT OF BOTTLES.

BY DR. EUGENE MURRAY-AARON.

It is a common thing for officers or sailors on sea-going vessels, and especially for passengers, whose time often hangs heavily on their hands, to write some message on a paper, inclose it in a bottle, cork it tight, and throw it overboard. Usually the paper contains a mere memorandum of the name of the ship, its latitude and longitude at the time, the date, the name of the captain and of the writer, with perhaps a humorous message to the finder—the whim of an idle hour. But possibly the writing may convey a more serious message, stating that the ship has sprung a leak and is about to founder, compelling its passengers and crew to take to the small boats. Very rarely has such a bottle been picked up by a passing vessel in time to rescue the survivors.

If the bottle has been securely corked it may float a long time on quiet seas, and may be carried many hundreds of miles on an ocean current. Such a waif, dropped into the Gulf Stream off the coast of the United States, has been picked up many months afterward on the shore of Ireland, Scotland, or Norway. When ocean storms come the angry waves dash the frail bottles on floating spars or projecting rocks, and the greater number are doubtless broken in this way. There are a few "dead spots" in the ocean, however, to which these tiny glass vessels may be carried, and where they may float in security for an indefinite time.

An officer on a Brazilian ship describes such a spot in the Caribbean Sea, which he says ought to be called the Port of Bottles. It lies nearly midway between the cities of Cartagena, Colombia, and Kingston, Jamaica, and about due east of Cape Gracias a Dios.

"It is out of the steamer tracks," he says, "and the action of the great currents going one way and another has left a space of stagnant water without any real movement at all. Anything that gets into the dead spots is apt to stay there, unless driven out by some big storm, and will simply drift round and round, gathering sea-grass and barnacles." He picked up three bottles floating together amid the drift, one empty, the others with papers inside.

One of these had been dropped in the sea three years before from a yacht in the Grand Cayman. He adds:

"I noticed a lot of other driftwood in the same spot, and I am confident that no end of bottles could be culled from the place. Hundreds are dropped overboard every year, but very few escape being knocked to pieces unless they happen to find their way to some such a still place as I have described."

There are a few other similar dead spots in the ocean, and it is possible that bottles might be picked up in them which had been floating securely for many long years.

What messages of merriment, what tales of distress and doom these frail glass voyagers might contain, who may guess?

A MODEL SPELLER.

BY CHARLES BATTLE LOOMIS.

A teacher whose spelling's unique
Thus wrote down the "Days of the Wique":
The first he spelt "Sunday,"
The second day, "Monday,"
And now a new teacher they sique.

A LITTLE GENTLEMAN.

I know a well-bred little boy who never "says" "I can't";
He never says "Don't want to," or "You've got to,"
or "You sha'n't";
He never says "I'll tell mama!" or calls his play-mates "mean."
A lad more careful of his speech I'm sure was never seen!

He's never ungrammatical—he never mentions "ain't";
A single word of slang from him would make his mother faint!
And now I'll tell you why it is (lest this should seem absurd):
He's now exactly six months old, and cannot speak a word!

—Hannah G. Fernald.

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An Explanation

There's a vine that runs fast 'neath our barn's drooping eaves,
With dainty brown pipes hidden under its leaves;
And Johnny said sally, "It may be a joke,
But much I do fear me, the vine-lairies' smoke."

Then lo, a small elf, with a confident wink,
Answered, "Oh to him who of evil may think!
His true name have piped, but I here do declare,
We merely blow soap-bubbles into the air."

Oh, largest and finest we use for balloons,
Go travel through sky unto far-away moons!
And all the wee bubbles the fairy folk blow
Are only what mortals call dewdrops, you know!

—Hannah G. Fernald.