

Polly Evans' Story Page for Boys and Girls

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A Mouse in Armor

PERHAPS some of you may remember how little Elsie was imprisoned in the immense clock which stood in the hallway of grandpa's house. She had always supposed a big giant lived there, you know, and that it was he who boomed forth solemnly the half hours and the hours. And when she saw the door ajar and no one within she felt tempted to hide there, just to see how it felt. Then the door swung to and she was held fast inside. Grandpa had rescued her, so that really no harm was done; but ever afterward as she passed along that hall, by the old clock, she couldn't help shuddering. Months after this adventure happened she paid another visit to grandpa and grandma, accompanied by her father and mother. As was her custom, she ran out to the barn as soon as she had greeted every one at the house, and there saw her friends among the animals.

When she had satisfied herself that not one of her old pets had been slighted, and when she had said "Good afternoon" even to the geese, she made her way back to the house. Running up the steps, across the porch, and then through the great oaken doors, soon she found herself in the hall. Timorously she tiptoed along. She had almost reached the



REMOVED THE CASQUE

stairs leading to the sitting room on the floor above, when suddenly she heard a funny creaking noise. Elsie quickly turned her head. What a sight met her eyes!

Right behind her stood a complete suit of armor, worn by one of Elsie's ancestors far back in the Middle Ages. And now it seemed that this suit of mail was turning its headpiece toward her, while it squeaked and creaked as though striving to speak to her.

"One moment the little girl looked, spellbound; then she darted upstairs with a shriek."

"Grandpa! Grandpa! the armor has come to life!" she cried.

Of course, all the folk descended to the hall at once. And when father removed the casque of the figure what do you think he found? Nothing but a little mouse, which, sapped to the floor and darted through the hall. This little mischief-maker, it seems, built his nest in the armor, and he it was who moved the head and made the mysterious squeaks.

How Paul Became a Soldier



AT THE smithy, in the glare of a blazing forge, Paul wrestled with a troublesome problem. Where DID they go? Closely his eye would follow the comet flight of pale golden sparks, created in myriads with each rhythmic descent of the ponderous hammer. Darting from the glowing metal like tiny stars, they would hang suspended in the air. All a-glimmering and a-shimmering they would be, until a fairy breath would blow them out. Then some would be sputter and shimmer and star. And little Paul would rub his eyes and wonder just what WHITIEK they had vanished.

But Paul was not so much absorbed in this problem as to be indifferent to happenings out of doors. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Oh, father, there's a man coming down the road and he has a gun and wears soldier clothes!"

Shading his eyes with his hand, the blacksmith gazed from the doorway along the one, straggling thoroughfare of the village. An instant later he belowed:

"Ten my word, if it's not Remsen—young Dick Remsen! Well, well, Dick; so you're home again!"

The wayfarer was easily within range of the smith's powerful voice, and he shouted lustily in return: "Right you are, John!"

Having cordially shaken hands, the two engaged in animated conversation. It seemed that Lord Howe's troops had sailed for Halifax, and Dick, a private in the Continental Army, was home from Boston on a short furlough.

"Before long," commented John Elliott, "we'll see a British fleet riding here in the sound, mark my words."

"Then they'll go as did the other fleet!" fiercely responded Dick, shouldering his musket with a eager movement. Turning to the smith, he observed little Paul.

"Have you no greeting for me, lad—no greeting for your old friend Dick?"

Paul came forward shyly. Of course, he always had a welcome for Dick, but this wasn't the same Dick to whom he had been accustomed. His Dick wore no uniform of buff and blue; nor was



"CUT IMMENSE CHUNKS FROM A HAM"

Scarcely two months later there was borne to the ears of those who remained in Bueschewick the sound of strenuous conflict. The rattle of musketry could be distinguished clearly, together with the persistent boom of cannon. Paul huddled close to his mother, she and Aunt Harriet sat in pale-faced anxiety. At last the firing ceased; silence again reigned over the hamlet, waiting to escape from the stifling air of the closed room. Paul took advantage of a favorable opportunity to steal away to the red barn. High up in the hayloft he secreted his small person. Certainly no redcoat could find him there!

All at once the boy was startled to hear a fumbling at the door latch. The door swung open and a soldier in the Continental uniform staggered in. After a momentary indecision he desperately climbed to the hayloft, flinging himself down, exhausted, near the lad's hiding place. Paul's first impulse was to bury himself deeper in the hay. Then although his heart



went thump, thump, thump; he found courage to peer through the hay screening him into the wounded man's dust-begrimed face.

"'Twas luck," he gasped, thrusting aside the hay.

"Lieutenant Dick," corrected the man as he feebly smiled.

Again, there came a noise at the door. Lieutenant Dick motioned the boy to be silent. The next instant there entered four British troopers. Reasoning from the quantity of provisions carried, their foraging for food had not been unsuccessful.

The troopers had jested for a while about the Americans' defeat, when one of them, busily occupied in cutting immense chunks from a ham with his claspknife, remarked:

"I believe about 3000 of the rebels got away. They've scamped toward the fort by the ferry. Lord Howe's orderly says we're going to clean them out tomorrow before daybreak—least, so he heard the general say."

Shortly afterward the soldiers in

high humor tramped from the barn. "Going to attack the fort tonight! I must warn our men! I've simply got to do it!" Dick, with an effort, raised himself to his elbow; then he collapsed.

"Confound this leg!" he moaned, his feet savoring with anger and pain.

For a minute he lay quiet, his eyes closed. Suddenly he looked up at Paul.

"Lad," said he, "your father told me he would turn Dobbin into the woods. Is the horse still there?"

"Yes, father took Jupiter away with him," replied Paul, "but Dobbin is in the woods."

"Perhaps the British haven't found him," Dick murmured, reflectively. Looking straight into Paul's eyes, he said:

"Lad, I taught you to ride. Are you willing to catch old Dobbin, and ride to the ferry with the message I will give you? Will you do this—for me, and for your country?"

Paul drew himself up to his full height, and clenched his sturdy little fists tightly. "Yes, Lieutenant Dick," he whispered steadily, although his lip quivered the least bit.

Dick hastily wrote upon a piece of paper. When finished, he read aloud:

"Colonel Bait:

"Am lying wounded at Bueschewick. Fort should be abandoned immediately. British attack tomorrow morning."

"Lieut. RICHARD REMSEN."

As though in afterthought, the lieutenant scribbled another little note. Both pieces of paper he rolled into tiny pellets. He handed them to Paul, saying:

"Take this first piece of paper and give it to the soldiers at the fort—that is, if you can. Should British men stop you, destroy the paper (swallow it, if you have to), tell them you have just come from the fort, but have lost your way, and show them this other pellet. Now, lad, you'd best be off. May God bless you!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Caliph-Merchant

"YOUR MAJESTY, there remains not a coin in the treasury. What shall we do to defray the expenses of our household?"

"Do as you have done in the past," returned the caliph, with a scowl; "tax the people."

The grand vizier shook his head doubtfully. "They are already on the point of revolting because of their heavy taxes," said he, "nor do I think they will submit to a further imposition."

"Go!" cried the caliph, "you weary me. Why, after my having appointed you to look after my affairs, do you come to me with your troubles? Have



"SELLS THE GOODS"

you not sufficient brains to plant. Leave me. I shall think of a way out of the difficulty."

And when the caliph had smoked seven or eight narghilehs—which, as you know, are a sort of water pipe—he lit upon a scheme.

The next day it was announced throughout Bagdad that the caliph himself was about to sell merchandise upon the main street.

Of course, the whole population of the city flocked to where the caliph sat under his tent, erected on the sidewalk and surrounded with bales of costly fabrics. The caliph had but to fix his own prices—you may be sure that he made them high enough—and the people bought and bought until he had disposed of all his wares.

Nor was it long before the caliph made such vast sums in the way of profit that his treasury was again filled, whereupon he promptly retired from "business." The very first thing he did after resuming his throne was to order the grand vizier put to death, because of his lack of cleverness. So, you see, the caliph couldn't have been a very good man, even though he had much brains.

The Voodoo Queen



MRS. LACERC sneezed anxiously across the table at the colonel, who nervously toyed with the food before him.

"Aren't you feeling well?" she asked, solicitously. "You look worried."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed the colonel, rousing himself from his reverie. "The fact is," he added, frankly, "I am a bit worried. Until lately everything was going well with my new project for the manufacture of paper bags from bagasse, the woody fiber of sugar cane. But now the darkies appear discontented—both those in the fields and the workers in the mill. Why, even old Uncle Toby, who is usually as open and cheerful as the day, is moping and sullen. The hands seem to think they deserve higher wages, although formerly they always were contented. I don't understand it."

LOUIS EXPLAINS

Louis and Marguerite listened to this conversation, of course, without saying a word. But when breakfast was over, and they were trudging toward the stable to have their ponies saddled for the usual morning canter, Louis gave expression to the thoughts which troubled them both.

"I knew something was the matter," he muttered. "And, do you know, I think it's all on account of that nice-looking darky girl they call 'Handsome Sue,' who came here to work about two weeks ago. Her people all believe she can do all sorts of wonderful magic through her voodoo charms. She has a great influence among them—an influence which I don't believe will make for any good."

"Did you tell me of what happened to you last week? I was paddling in the bayou toward Lake Fontchartrain. It was about eight miles from Pecan Grove. If you measure the distance as the crow flies, when I crew up under an overhanging cypress tree a moment when I scrambled up the trunk, I found a great number of feet sticking out from the branches. I'm sure when I was in the boat I heard among the voices that of 'Handsome

Whercin the Monkey's Guests Do Harm

NOT that the monkey was an ungracious host—no, indeed, he was anything but that. When the tortoise arrived at his house on the evening before, he had made the old fellow welcome, saying:

"Come in, Mr. Tortoise, and I shall make you as comfortable as I can."

And when the rabbit came wearily to a halt before the monkey's door, and begged the monkey for a glass of water, the monkey straightway pulled him into the house and declared that he should lodge there for the rest of the night.

So, too, the kangaroo was forced to become the guest of the kind Mr. Monkey.

But it was for the very reason that the monkey indignantly refused payment that the three wayfarers wished to return his kindness in some fitting way. Had he not something to do with some sort—with which they might aid him?

No, said the monkey at first, and then he bethought himself that it was high time his wheat were sown. Did the tortoise, the rabbit and the kangaroo wish to help him? It would not take so very long.

Of course the three would help. And they straightway slung the bags of grain about their shoulders. Over the field they went, sowing the grain industriously. So hard did they work that by noon the task was finished. Thereupon the monkey invited them to dinner, after which he speeded them upon their way.

The monkey had almost forgotten about his three guests when the shoots of the young wheat began to appear above the ground. Out to his field trudged the monkey to examine its growth. But when there he stared aghast. How did it happen that the wheat grew in such peculiar fashion? Then the solution of the problem presented itself to him.

The tortoise, in sowing, made such slow progress that the grains were



THE NEGROES FLEE

Then, with a sign of warning to Marguerite, Louis released the dogs. Right into the center of the meeting ground dashed the two huge animals. One glance, and with cries of alarm and terror, every negro was in flight. So sudden was the disappearance that Marguerite and Louis could hardly believe their eyes. They recalled the dogs, who were about to pursue some of the negroes.

So excited were the boy and girl that they could hardly accomplish the journey back home quickly enough. And when they burst in upon their father, he colored as you can imagine how interested he was in their story.

"You shouldn't have done it," he said, when the tale of their escapade was concluded. "Nevertheless, I'm glad, indeed, to learn of these things among my hands. I believe I can now go about remedying my troubles in the proper way."

As a result of the children's discovery, "Handsome Sue" was discharged on the morrow. She it was, no doubt, who had incited the darkies to make such unreasonable demands. There was a general murmur of protest and somewhat of defiance when Sue was told to depart. A few of the hands left with her, but the rest, now removed from the influence of the voodoo queen, soon became the capable workers they were formerly, and all discontent seemed to vanish.

Marguerite and Louis often recalled "Handsome Sue," and wondered whether she became the queen of another body of voodoo worshippers. Marguerite was just a teeny, weeny bit afraid that perhaps the "queen" might cast some horrible spell upon them, as was intimated by her old folks. But Louis scoffed at the idea and declared he was ready to meet any number of voodooes, and at any time, too.