

a heavy rain, and the stepping-stones on which Bess used to cross—for she did not like wading—were nearly covered. They were very anxious to get across, for it was blackberry-time, and they had promised Madame to pick her all she wanted for canning and jam and blackberry cordial, because May's father had taken her and Roland away on a journey, and nobody else had any time to spare. I went on ahead, but when I found they were not coming, I stopped and looked back, and there stood Charlie in the water, trying to persuade Bess to take off her shoes and stockings and wade, but she only stood on the bank and shook her head.

“It's as warm as toast,” he shouted, “and it's not deep, Bess. I wouldn't be afraid to cross backward;” and he began to do it, looking up at her, laughing. He had forgotten that there was a pretty deep hole on one side of the stepping-stones, even when the brook was not swollen, as it was now, and the first thing he knew he had tumbled backward into water that was over his head. It did not have to be very deep for that, you know, for his head was not high up at all. Bess gave a scream, and I was afraid she would jump in after him; so I barked to say that I was coming, and dashed into the water, and caught his jacket as he came up, for he had gone right down at first. He was too heavy for me to pull him all the way out, but I towed him to a shallow place, and he very soon got on his feet and scrambled out; and as he could not give a shake and run himself dry, as I could, we all had to go home. I did not think I had done anything much, for I think he would have