



GOOD STORIES

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

MARY AND KATIE.

“NOW then, Katie, we’ll go somewhere else,” said Mary; and Katie, as usual, obeyed her elder sister.

Mary and Katie were two little town-girls who had been sent to spend a fortnight at a farmhouse, for health’s sake; or rather, timid, dreamy little Katie had been sent into the country in the hope that she might borrow a little bloom from the dog-roses, and a little springiness from the fresh meadow-breezes; and bustling, unromantic Mary had been sent with her that she might not feel lonely, and that she might be forced to run about. The sisters had been sitting in a little green lumber-yard between the barn and the high, straggling hedge that bordered the winding road which led up to the farmhouse. A broken old waggon-wheel leaned against the grey and green, warped weatherboards of the old barn. A gnarled old tree sprawled its rustling leaves over the gabled, moss-patched thatch. Two or three brown hens and a cream-coloured cock were scratching and clucking in the green little yard. Amongst its other lumber was a mossy, crooked little tree-trunk, and on this the little girls had been seated—Katie enjoying the sunny quiet only broken by lulling sounds. The barn doors were open on both sides, so the little girls could see through to the strawyard beyond, in which purple and plumpudding pigs were basking, brown sparrows hopping, and black “beasts” and the silver-tailed, silver-maned chestnut colt pulling green food out of a grey, roofed rack in sociable silence; and beyond the strawyard, the low-pitched, yellow-washed farmhouse, with its tiny, paled strip of garden in front, the tall hollyhocks blinding the leaden-latticed

lower windows, and a row of plump pigeons cooing sleepily on the ridge of the thatched roof. Two men thrashing old corn in the barn brought down their swinging flails with a monotonous *thud—thud*, but Katie called it “blunt music.” One of the flails, too, interested her. She could see the man who wielded the other, working away in his blue shirt and corduroy breeches with his loosened braces dangling from them; but *this* flail went up and down as if it did so of its own accord, because the man who was using it stood farther back than the other man; and therefore Katie had been watching its mysterious appearances and disappearances with a curiosity which was half-frightened but still very pleasant. Katie could have sat on the crooked little tree-trunk all day, but Mary had soon tired of the little lumber-yard. “Come along, Katie,” she said—very pleased to find what she thought her duty tally with her own wishes. “Come along, Katie; you know Mamma said that I was not to let you mope.” They scrambled through a hole in the hedge, and went along the winding road. But Katie soon wanted to sit down again. She was tired, for one thing; and for another, it was not so necessary for her enjoyment as it was for Mary’s to be always moving on or “doing something.” She leaned back against the grassy hedge-bank, and looked at the solitary oak drooping its scalloped leaves over the green corn in the middle of the opposite field, and looked so pleased that Mary looked at it too—but when Mary found that she had only a tree in the middle of a corn-field to look at, she could not help saying rather testily, “Why, Katie, what a goose you are—I thought there