

"Why don't you come and sit by me?" asked Mary.

"It doesn't seem kind—the grave doesn't belong to us."

"Why, who said it did? What are you talking about, Katie?"

"I should like you or Mamma or Papa to come and sit on my grave; it would seem as if I was in bed, and you'd come up stairs to talk to me; but I don't think I should like any one I didn't know to come."

"Well, you *are* a queer child, Katie," said Mary; but she, too, after that sat still for a few minutes. The churchyard was a very quiet place. One of the Rectory bedroom-windows, peeping through the limes that divided the churchyard from the Rectory garden, was the only sign of a house in sight. There was an old sun-dial over the old church clock. When the clock had struck the hour, they could hear a hum in the ivy-covered old tower for "ever so long" afterwards. Little birds chirped in the ivy; rooks cawed sleepily as they flew about the churchyard elms. A superannuated blind white horse lay in the shade of the black yew tree; and Mary and Katie sat quite silent in the midst of the warm green graves and hoary tottering gravestones.

But Mary soon grew tired of this. "Now then, Katie, you must get up. Mamma said I was not to let you sit on the grass too long."

As they were going out of the graveyard, Katie turned round to look at it once more. "Oh, that is a pretty place," she said. "When I die, I should like to be buried there—just where I was sitting."

"I wish, Katie, you wouldn't be so gloomy. You take all the fun out of everything. Aunt Annie says that it's wicked, besides being silly, to talk about dying before your time like that. Ain't you thirsty?—I am. Let's go and see if we can get a drink of water somewhere."

They passed the pound, and the cage, and a roadside cart-lodge without seeing any cottages, but the road swept round sharply at the cart-lodge, and just beyond they came upon three or four old gabled cottages, leaning forward as if they had nodded in their sleep. A water-butt stood beside the porch of one of them, and in front of it, just off the road, there was a well. So the little girls tripped up to the open door of the cottage, and Mary asked for water.

"Surely, Miss," said the good woman of the house. "Well's dry, and the water in the butt ain't fit to drink; but I'll fetch ye some from the spring if ye'll step in and set down a bit. The little gal seems tired—she don't look strong. Set ye down, my dear."

The back door was also open, and Katie seated herself between the two doors, enjoy-

ing the cool draught and the sight of the shady little back garden, down which she could see the good woman going with her jug. The bottom wall of the back garden was a bank of red earth and rock. Brambles and ferns grew on it. A silver birch-stem twisted itself out of one cranny; out of another, that had been widened and squared a little, trickled clear cold water. The woman picked a dock-leaf, made a spout of it, and soon came back with a jugful of ice-cold water. Katie thought her big mugful of it was the most delicious drink she had ever tasted; but though it had cooled her so at first, she was astonished to find that in a minute or too she felt hotter than before.

"You don't look well, Miss; you'd better stop and rest a bit longer," said the woman.

Whilst Katie was resting, Mary ran out into the garden, and having noticed a little wood at the bottom of the field on the other side of the garden fence, she ran back to inquire whether there were any blackberries there.

"Tain't blackberryin' time, Miss."

"Well, but may people go in there?"

"Oh, yes, them may go as likes, but there ain't much to see, and if you're going that way, you'd better take care you don't go too nigh the Witch's Pool."

"What's that?" asked Mary.

"A nasty, black, deep pool o' water down at the bottom t'other side o' the wood—nobody don't know how deep it is. If you was once to fall in, nobody could get ye out."

"But why is it called the Witch's Pool?" asked Katie.

"I don't know, my dear. They do say that if you chucks a stone in, the number o' bubbles as comes up will show you how many years you's lived, and has got to live. I don't believe that. I never tried it, but if I was to, I 'ont believe there'd be fifty-three bubbles come up—no less, let alone no more—and that's my age, if I was to die this minute. If you're going anywheres near the pool, mind you don't let your little sister, pretty dear, get too near the edge, Miss."

"Oh, I'll take care of her," answered Mary. "We are much obliged to you for the nice water." And the little girls went through the cottage-garden, and out through the gate into the field, and so into the little wood.

Katie felt that the sight of the pool would frighten her, and yet she had a strange longing to see it; and Mary, though she didn't care anything about the bubbles story, thought that as there was nothing else to see, she might as well have a look at a pool so deep that nobody knew how deep it was.

They soon found their way down to the pool. A little sunlight had straggled in upon it, but