

where the poultry scratched about and Mrs. Tubbs dried her clothes on the washing-day. At the bottom of this field, quite out of sight of the house, because the field swelled up into a sort of hillock in the middle, was a shallow stream, or beck, as the country people called it, just narrow enough in some parts for Lucy and me to jump over. In other places it was a great deal wider than that, and, if we wanted to go across, we had to put great pieces of stone in the water and step over them very carefully. Lucy and I often used to go and play there because it was so quiet and still, quite out of reach of Mrs. Tubbs and her scolding. On the other side of the stream was a beautiful overhanging bank, with wild flowers clustering upon it, and plumes of meadow-sweet fringing the edges, and tufts of fern and moss springing out of the shady rifts. In one place this bank had been worn away into a hollow almost as large as a little room, and just over the hollow an old elm-tree grew, whose lower branches made a sort of roof. At least, if they had come a little lower down, they would have made a very nice roof indeed. When the sun was shining as brightly as could be