

(Continued from page 21.)

Catie; half as much as I do; you was going to say: but come, Catie, you ask him, and see what he'll say.

'Grandpa, we want to know why the apples don't all get ripe together?'

'What a question! I should think that was one of Jim's. He's always thinking strange things. You just come down and sit in the sunshine here, and I'll tell you. It's just the same with apples, I reckon, that it is with children: some are sour to begin with, and nobody tries to graft them and dig about them, and make them better. Now that tree there that bears those luscious sweet 'uns, I'll just tell you about.'

When I came here, it had on the gnarliest apples you ever saw—just good for nothing. Says I, I'll see what I can do, so I digged about it and grafted it, and watched it, and tended it, and cut off the lopping branches, and tied up the strong ones; and just look at it now, and taste the apples—ain't they beauties?'

'Now I'm thinking, grandpa,' said Catie, 'why children are like the trees.'

'Why, some, you see, grow up naturally sweet and good, just like Catie, and others want lots of care; and then some seem to have a gift for taking the best of everything and making the most of it, and so get ripe. Now I ain't of that sort. I sometimes think I grow worse and worse, and that I shall be sour clear through. I'm sure I should if you hadn't come Catie, to let the sunshine upon me. Dear me! it's been winter to me for a long, long time—nobody to care for me, and yet I didn't want to grow cross, and be crabbed and sour to the end. I tell you, boys, begin when you're young to find the sunshine. Try to get ripe by keeping love about you. Now I must go, for I can't do without my afternoon nap.'

'I'll run first and fix the cushions for you,' said Catie, 'and then, boys, we must be off for school. Don't you see we've only fifteen minutes, and we wouldn't be late for anything, would we?'

As they were climbing up the hill, James chanced to throw his arm back and hit Robert.

Without stopping to know if it happened by accident, Robert got very angry, and was about to strike James, when Catie stepped in between them with a gentle 'He didn't mean to!'

'Well, I'll be darned if I don't lick him after school!' said Rob.

'Ob, that makes me think,' said Catie, 'you were going to explain to me what you meant by saying so, to pay me for telling you about the nines.'

'Now, Catie, you are too bad!' said Jim; you know that we don't mean anything.'

'Then what do you say so for? How you'd laugh at me, if I was to say something that didn't mean anything.'

'You ain't a boy though, Catie.'

'Well, you think boys know the most, don't you?' said Catie, roguishly.

'Well, I'll tell you what I say it for—it's because I'm mad, and I must say something.'

'Well, say 'humity flum.' That sounds better than 'I'll be darned,' for that's no better than swearing. I never could see the use, though, in saying anything that didn't mean anything.'

'Well, I guess you do sometimes,' said Rob. 'I used to say, 'Oh gracious!' at everything, and 'Oh mercy!' till I broke myself of the habit.'

'How did you do it, Catie? For I do feel afraid sometimes that I shall grow up and be like some men I know of, and be always saying low words,' said James.

'Well, my mother had told me very often that she thought it was not very ladylike to keep saying those words, but I didn't think much about it till we had a visitor come to see us. He was a real gentleman, and I liked him very much, and he used to take me to walk and talk with me. One day he took me where a great many men were at work building a railroad. I wondered what he went there for; but he sat down very quietly, and asked me to sit beside him. We were close by the men, and could hear all they said, and you never heard such coarse words.'

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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