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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WRECK \*\*\*



[Frontispiece]

# THE WRECK.

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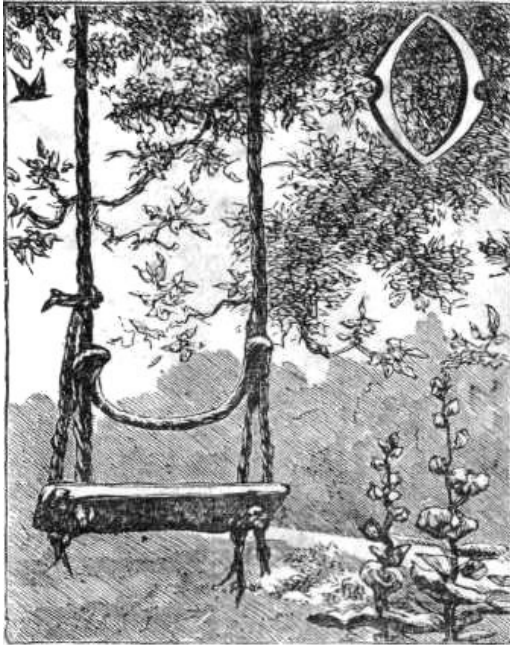
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## THE WRECK.



Ollie had been swinging for nearly an hour in the grove behind the old farm-house, when she heard her mother's voice calling, "Ollie, Ollie! where are you, child?" Ollie stopped swinging and listened. "That is mamma," she said; "I must run quickly and see what she wants." So, jumping down and leaving the swing to "die away" by itself, she skipped along the path which led up to the back door. Her mother was standing on the step, holding a basket in her hand. When she saw Ollie she said, "Ah, here you are; I have been looking for you all over the house."

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"I have been swinging, and only just heard you calling," answered Ollie. "Do you want me?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Rogers; "I want some more sugar. I thought we had plenty, but these new cookies that Mrs. Coe told me about do take a great deal more than my old ones. So, go as quickly as you can, my dear, for I am dreadfully bothered for the want of it."

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"Yes," said Ollie, taking the basket; "I will not be a minute. Couldn't Willie go with me? See, he is looking through the window. I am sure a little walk would do

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him good."

"No, not yet," said Mrs. Rogers. "The doctor says he must not leave the house before next week. Now run along."



Ollie threw a kiss toward the window and started down the path. She was just going to open the gate when she heard a "rat-tat-tat" behind her.



"Willie wants something, I am sure," she said, turning back again; "I wonder what it is! He is pointing under that bush, but I do not see anything. Ah, here you are, you rogue! it is you who are wanted;" and she pulled out a great big black rabbit, Willie's especial pet. "It is just as well that I have to go to the house again, for I forgot my sun-umbrella, and I am sure the day is very hot."

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The sun-umbrella to which Ollie alluded was one of her birthday presents, and she was always glad when the sun was hot enough to make it useful. The rabbit being laid in Willie's lap, Ollie started off once more, running as fast as she could to make up for lost time. In a few minutes she reached the village. The sugar was soon bought and tucked away in the basket.

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Ollie ran along, and was just hesitating whether she should climb the fence and run through Squire Thompson's lot, or go around by the road, when she saw, just before her, Lucy Coit, walking along with her school-books in her bag.



"There is Lucy," said Ollie; "I wonder what she is doing with her bag of books at this time of day. I will run up and ask her."

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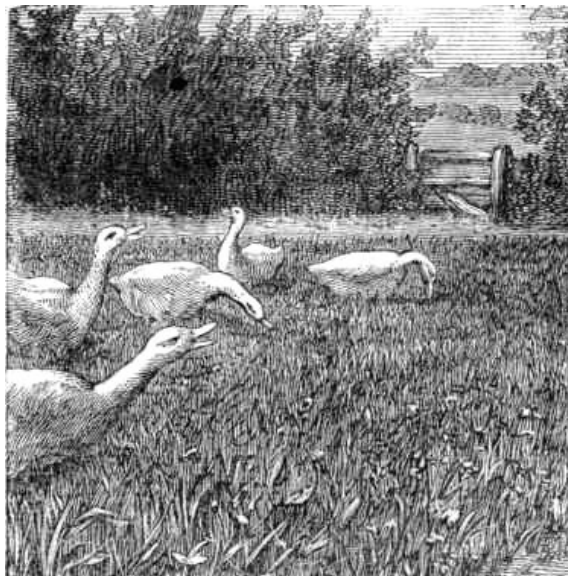
Ollie soon overtook her schoolmate, and putting her arm around her waist they walked on together.

"I could not imagine what you were carrying your school-books for," said Ollie. "You can't have been kept after school, for you always know your lessons so well."

"No," said Lucy, "I wasn't kept after, but I stayed myself. I couldn't get a sum in fractions right, and Miss Palmer said if I would wait till every one had gone she would show me about it. Now I know it, and I am going down to the beach. Don't you want to go too?"

"Oh, yes," said Ollie; "but I must take this sugar to mamma first. Let's climb over these bars and cut across this field. It is a great deal shorter than by the road."

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There were some geese in the field, which evidently did not like to have their privacy intruded upon, for they set up a terrible quacking as the children passed them. Ollie and Lucy, however, quacked back again, and the geese soon left them and continued to nibble away at the grass.

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Ollie soon reached her home, and leaving her basket on the table she ran up-stairs to find her mother, for she wanted permission to go to the beach.

"Yes," said Mrs. Rogers, "you may go; but it looks a little showery, and I don't want you to get wet. Watch the clouds, and if you see a storm coming, hurry home, so as to get in before the rain."

Ollie promised to do as she was told and kissing her mother good-by she ran down-stairs. She found Lucy standing by the fence, looking over into Mr. Beech's yard. Mr. Beech lived next to Ollie's papa, and he had one little girl. Every one called her "Chubby," because she was so plump

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and round.



"Lucy," called Ollie, "what are you doing?"

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"Come here a minute," said Lucy.

Ollie went to the fence, and there she saw Chubby holding a basket full of delicious ripe strawberries. "Why, Chubby," said Ollie, "what are you going to do with those lovely berries? How good they look, don't they, Lucy?"

"Oh," said Chubby, "I must be very careful, for they do roll about so that I can hardly carry them. You may each have one, but I cannot spare more, because they are for my tea-party."

So Chubby passed the basket very carefully to the children, while each one helped herself, and then she started to walk carefully over the grass toward a seat under a big tree.

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"And what is your party?" asked Lucy. "It must be a very nice one, I think, if you have such things as those to eat."

"Oh, there it is," said Chubby; and looking in the direction of her finger the children saw a table covered with a white cloth, and a pretty blue tea-set upon it.



They had evidently been very hungry when they began the feast, for not a crumb remained upon one of the plates, and three little girls were sitting there, waiting patiently for a fresh supply of good things. Ollie and Lucy watched Chubby till she set her plate of berries safely upon the table, and then, turning around, they remembered that they had only a short time to stay at the beach, and that consequently they had better not lose any more time in loitering by the way.

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It was only a quarter of a mile from Ollie's house to the water, and it did not take long to get over the ground which lay between. Ollie was never tired of the ocean, and it was a rare thing for her to let a day pass without spending some time on the shore.

Some one was there before them, and at first the children could not imagine whom it could be; but as they drew nearer they saw that it was Miss Palmer, their teacher. She had thrown off her hat, and was reading so earnestly that she neither saw nor heard the children till they were close upon her.

Miss Palmer was very much beloved by all of her scholars, and they thought nothing a greater treat than to sit by her side and listen while she told them stories or talked to them. So when our

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two little friends saw who it was, they ran and sat down, one on each side of her.



Miss Palmer looked up, and upon seeing who it was that had interrupted her she closed her book, and said she was just wishing she had some one to talk to. [Pg 27]

"Do you notice how still it is?" she said, "and how close and hot the air is? I fear we are going to have a terrible storm. We must watch the clouds, and run a race with them. If we get home first, all will be well, but if the clouds do, alas for our clothes!"

Just as she spoke they heard a low muttering of thunder, and then suddenly a blast of cold wind rushed by them. The big black clouds rolled rapidly up, and in a moment the whole scene before them was changed. The ocean began to have a lowering, angry look, and a schooner which had been lying lazily in the water gave a bound forward like a live creature, and sped on its way. Miss Palmer sprang to her feet, saying, "Now, children, the time for the race has come. The rain is determined to get there first, but so are we; see who will win the race." [Pg 28]



So all three started on at a quick pace. One big drop fell on Lucy's hand, and they hurried on. The race was barely theirs, for just as they stepped in at the door a blinding flash of lightning came, and a crash of thunder almost at the same instant, which made them glad enough that they were safely housed. [Pg 29]

Although the thunder and lightning ceased after a while, and even the rain poured itself out, the wind continued to blow furiously. Lucy waited till she dared wait no longer, and then said that she must go home, for she knew her mother was already anxious about her. [Pg 30]

"Oh, you can't go, Lucy," said Ollie; "see how that great tree bends; why, you couldn't keep on your feet for one minute."

Just then they looked out of the window and saw Ollie's father riding by. He had just stopped to speak to some one, and Ollie, losing no time, opened the window and called to him.



"Papa, papa," she called, "do you think it is safe for Lucy to try to go home?"

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The wind was making such a terrible noise that Ollie's voice could not be heard.

Mr. Rogers dismounted and came to the window. He did not think it at all safe for Lucy to go home in such a gale, and promised instead to go to Mr. Coit's house and beg permission for Lucy to stay all night with Ollie.

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Of course both of the children were overjoyed with this arrangement, and begun at once to amuse themselves. Ollie's papa soon came back, bringing with him a bag for Lucy, which contained everything that she could possibly want during the night.

The wind, instead of abating, increased in fury. It roared and screamed about the house like an angry wild beast. It caught up the clothes which old Milly had spread upon the grass to bleach, and whirled them round and round in circles over the house, and carried them off no one knew where. It seized the old bucket which hung in the well, and swung it back and forth with such force that no one dared go near enough to fasten it.

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At eight o'clock the children went to bed, and in spite of the wind they were soon sleeping soundly. All was still within the house, and both Lucy and Ollie were too much used to storms on the sea-shore to be disturbed by them.



Suddenly, however, Lucy started from her bed. What was that sound? surely it was the slamming of the front door. While she was listening she saw something which made her heart beat fast. It was a rocket which shot by her window. Another and another followed. Lucy sprang out of bed and began to dress. There was hardly a child in Spehunket who did not know the terrible meaning of the rocket soaring into the air in the dead of night.

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Lucy hastily slipped on her clothes, and then, going back to the bed, she took Ollie's hand and called softly,

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"Ollie, Ollie! wake up. There is a wreck, and I think some of the people have gone down to the

beach. Don't you want to go too?"

Ollie started up, looking frightened at being so suddenly roused. "What is it? what is it?" she asked excitedly. "What is the matter?"

"There is a wreck, Ollie," said Lucy, "and the men at the life-saving station are hard at work. Oh, Ollie! just think of the poor things clinging to the ship, and expecting every moment to go down! I must go down there and see if I can't do something to help."

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By this time Ollie was wide awake, and as interested as Lucy. It did not take her long to dress, and in a few minutes they went softly down-stairs. Mrs. Rogers' bed-room door was open, and upon looking in the children saw that Ollie's papa and mamma had gone to the beach. As there was no one of whom they could ask permission, each little girl wrapped herself warmly in a woollen shawl, and drawing the bolt of the kitchen door they stepped out into the night.

It was two o'clock, and during the six hours which had passed since they went to bed the wind had abated in force somewhat. The sky was full of black, angry-looking clouds, but the moon was struggling to make herself seen. On the whole, it was not a dark night, and the children found no difficulty whatever in seeing the well-worn path which led through their field to the beach. If they had been doubtful of the way they would have been guided by the bonfires, and by an occasional rocket which shot up into the air; but as it was they knew the road well, and excepting when the moon was hidden for a moment behind a cloud, all was bright around them.

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They soon reached the beach, and were there just in time to see the men from the station bring down the life-boat. It was a hard pull through the sand, but the feat was soon accomplished, and the boat was left near the water's edge, to be ready in case the line from the mortar should fail to reach the wreck.

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The mortar was standing there, and the men were preparing to send out the line which was to bring succor to the terrified passengers on the wreck. At the word of command the string was pulled—"Bang," and off went the line, curving through the air. Every one watched in breathless anxiety to see if it would reach the ship. Yes, on it went, and then dropped down upon the deck.

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A shout of joy rose up from the crowd upon the beach, and it must have been answered by those on the wreck, but every sound was lost in the roaring of the wind and of the angry waves. In an instant a stronger line was attached, and to that, after being drawn on board and securely fastened to the mast, a little car was attached and was quickly drawn on board. Into this car one human being could get at a time, and could be drawn over the breakers safely to the shore.

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The work of the night now began in earnest. Back and forth went the car. Sometimes it brought back a little child, sometimes a papa or mamma, and at last the sailors one by one, and then, last of all, the faithful captain, who would not leave his ship until he had seen all his passengers and crew safely on the land.

When they began working the car Lucy and Ollie stood by looking on, and longing to help those brave men. But they were only little girls, and what could they do?

"Ollie," said Lucy, "I have an idea. Do you see that bonfire? It is nearly out. If you will gather some sticks and build it up again, I will run back to your house, and get some coffee and a kettle. I think a cup of coffee would refresh these men wonderfully."

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"Oh, yes, Lucy," said Ollie, "run—run quickly. Tell Milly to help you. I saw Sambo here a moment ago—oh, here he is. Sambo, Sambo, go back to the house with Miss Lucy and help her bring some things which she wants."

Lucy and Sambo were off in a hurry, and as soon as they were gone Ollie gathered all the drift-wood she could find, and proceeded immediately to brighten up the fire, which had nearly died away. She worked steadily and quietly, and by the time she had a bright blaze Lucy reappeared with a big package of coffee, a pot, and a pail of water. They filled the pot and put it over the fire and waited for it to boil. It seemed a long time before the steam began to rise, but gradually it

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became more and more dense, until at last the cover of the pot began to dance up and down, and the delightful bubbling sound greeted their ears which told that the water was boiling.

The coffee was already in the coffee-pot, and in a short time the grateful fragrance rose upon the air.

"Oh, oh," said Ollie, "we have neither milk nor sugar!"

"I never thought of that," said Lucy, in a disappointed tone, "but I know they must have some at the lifesaving-station."

"I knows where they keeps it, miss, for I used to be on the crew once," said Sambo; "I'll be back in a jiffy with it."

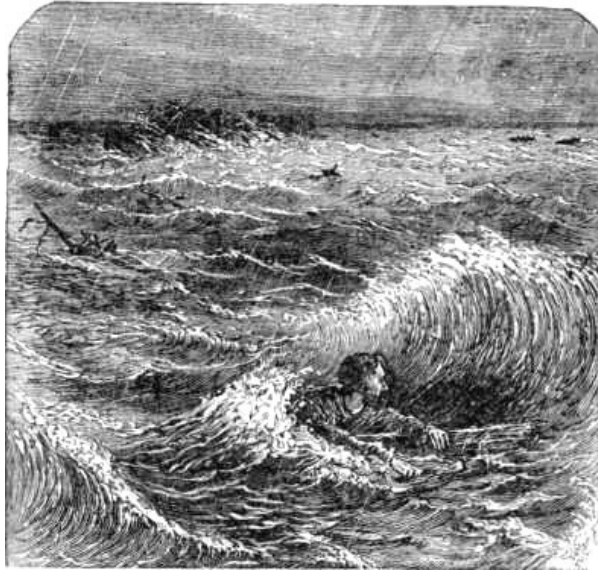
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So off went Sambo. The sugar was found, but alas, there was no milk.

"Never mind," said Ollie; "they must take it as it is. It will do them just as much good."

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Now all this time the brave men of the life-saving station had been hard at work, drawing the car back and forth, and they had just brought in the captain, who, as I said, stood faithfully by his ship until all on board had been rescued, when some one shouted,



"A man—a man in the surf!" They rushed into the water and looked anxiously before them. Yes, there he was, clinging to a piece of the broken mast. His strength was almost gone, and just as a big wave was about to break over him two strong pairs of hands seized and dragged him almost exhausted to the shore.

"Would you like some hot coffee? Would you like some hot coffee?"

"What's that I hear about hot coffee?" said one and another joyfully. "Hot coffee! why, who has been good enough to think of that?"

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"A cup of coffee would be a good thing," said Joe Brown; "for the fact is, I for one am just about beat out."

Lucy and Ollie were quite delighted at the success of their undertaking, and for the next half hour were busy enough in pouring and passing the coffee. Not only were the men of the station thankful for a good drink, but so were the poor tired and frightened passengers; and the children had all they could do to fill up the cups fast enough.

They received a great many thanks and a great many praises for their thoughtfulness, and when they were through the captain of the wrecked steamer proposed three cheers for the kind little girls who had done so much to refresh them.

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The cheers were hearty enough, and the children were quite embarrassed to have the attention of so many people called to them. They felt quite repaid for all their trouble when they saw how refreshed every one looked after taking a cup of their good hot coffee.

After a while the crowd began to move on toward the station. The crew rolled up their ropes and proceeded to drag up the boat, which they had not needed after all.

All were happy and thankful that no lives had been lost, but the poor passengers were rather melancholy at the thought of probably losing all their luggage. Every one was wet through, and it was necessary that they should get on dry clothes as soon as possible.

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All the houses in the village were opened to the sufferers, and soon every one was made comfortable. Clothing of all sorts was lent them, for the morrow, but in the mean time they were glad to go to bed and get a good rest and sleep.

Ollie and Lucy went back to bed too, but no sleep came to them. They talked until they saw the morning dawn, and soon after sunrise they rose and dressed for breakfast.

After breakfast they went down on the beach again to look at the wreck, and they spent a great deal of time there watching it. A great many efforts were made to save her, but all in vain. One day, when the wind was unusually high, a great wave struck her side, a crash was heard, and down she went, out of sight forever, beneath the waves.

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"Now," said Lucy, "I suppose I must go home. Mamma will be impatient to see me and to know that I am all right after the storm."

"And you want to see her too, I have no doubt," said Ollie.

"Yes, indeed I do, but I should like to come back again. It is such fun to have a girl of my own age to talk to; but mamma has to be very busy this week, and I must get back and help her."

So Lucy walked toward the house. She wanted to get her bag, and to say good-by to Ollie's mamma.

The two children were talking so busily as they went along that they did not notice a horse and wagon standing at the gate of Mr. Rogers's house, until they were close upon it.

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"Why, Ollie!" exclaimed Lucy; "there is our horse; papa must have come for me. I wonder if we have kept him waiting!"

The children hurried in, and were soon in the sitting-room, where, to their surprise, they found Mr. and Mrs. Coit, talking very busily.

"Oh, mamma!" said Lucy, running forward to get a good-morning kiss, "have you come for me? It was too bad to keep you waiting; I will be ready in one minute."

"I have not come to take you away," said Mrs. Coit, "but to beg Mrs. Rogers to keep you a little longer."

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"Ah, Miss Lucy," said Ollie, laughing, "you see they have found it so pleasant to be without you that they are going to give you to us."

Lucy looked from one to another in surprise. "What do you mean, mamma?" she asked; "am I to stay here? what for? how long?"

"I will tell you," said her mother. "Just after Mr. Rogers left our house with your bag, last night, your father brought a letter from the post-office from your Aunt Mary. She is going to move out West, and wants us to go on and make her a visit before she leaves. We are going to take Willie, for I think a change of air would do him good, after his illness; but your aunt's house is so small, I do not think it is best for you to go. As Mrs. Rogers has consented to keep you, I think you had better stay here."

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"Oh, good, good, good!" exclaimed Ollie, clapping her hands and jumping around the room for joy. "Now you will have to stay, and be my sister for a good long week."

Lucy hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. She was delighted to stay with her friend, but the thought of being so long away from her mamma made her feel almost homesick.

"I will write you a letter every day," said Mrs. Coit, seeing the cloud on her little girl's face.

But the cloud only stayed a minute. "After all," she thought, "mamma will only be gone for a week, and I would much rather be here with Ollie than at Aunt Mary's, where there is no one of my own age; and a letter every day! oh, that will be *too* delightful!"

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"Well, I must go," said Mrs. Coit. "Thank you very much, Mrs. Rogers, for taking Lucy; I hope she will be a good child, and not give you any trouble. Good-by."

"Martha will send over your trunk this afternoon," she continued to Lucy. "It is all packed, and William Henry Johnson said he'd bring it over on his way to the mill this evening. Good-by, my dear," and Lucy was seized, hugged, and kissed, and almost before she knew what it was all about her mother had gone, and she was left alone, watching the wagon as it rolled slowly down the road.

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She was roused by hearing Ollie's voice close behind her.

"Oh, Lucy, let's go up-stairs, and get the room ready for you. I must move the things in my closet, and make enough bare nails for your dresses."

So the two girls went up-stairs together, and the afternoon was passed in preparations for the coming week.

The next morning Lucy and Ollie went to school as usual, only instead of having a long solitary walk, they each had the other's company, which they found very pleasant. The girls at school were quite astonished to hear that they were spending the week together.

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As they were walking back from school, they saw on the beach the signal which was always used to show that there were fish in sight.

"Oh, let us hurry through our dinner," said Ollie, "and go down to the beach. I love to see them draw in their big nets full of fish. It is such fun."

Mrs. Rogers was astonished to see two wild children rush into the house, all out of breath, exclaiming,

"Isn't dinner ready? We are in such a hurry to get down to the beach."

"Yes, dinner is ready," said Mrs. Rogers; "you can sit down as soon as you like."

As soon as they had eaten as much as they wanted, and had been excused, they rushed to the beach. The men were just preparing to launch the big boat through the surf. When the children came in sight, the captain of the crew saw them and said, [Pg 57]

"Hold up a minute; here are our little friends; they always enjoy a dance on the waves; let's wait, and take them in."

So they beckoned to the children, and in a few minutes they were seated in the boat. The word of command was given, and off they went—now up on the top of the wave, now down, down, down.

They had an unusually good haul of fish, which the men insisted was all owing to the presence of the two little girls. They stayed on the beach or in the boat all the afternoon, and finally went home to supper so hungry that Mrs. Rogers laughingly declared that she could not possibly cook enough in one day to satisfy them. [Pg 58]

Mrs. Coit kept her promise and wrote to Lucy every day, and between her letters and her good times with Ollie, the days passed so quickly that Lucy was surprised to find at last that the hour for her departure had arrived.

"How little we thought that day when I walked home with you that I was to be here a week!"

"I wish we were going to have it all over again," said Ollie.

"So do I," said Lucy.

THE END.

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### Transcriber's Note

The following typos have been corrected.

Page	Typo	Correction
13	shorer	shorter
46	joyfully	joyfully.

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