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CLASSICS

What Katy Did at School & What Katy Did Next

SUSAN COOLIDGE



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

What Katy Did at School
&
What Katy Did Next

SUSAN COOLIDGE



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WHAT KATY DID AT SCHOOL

CHAPTER ONE

Conic Section

It was just after that happy visit of which I told at the end of *What Katy Did*, that Elsie and John made their famous excursion to Conic Section; an excursion which neither of them ever forgot, and about which the family teased them for a long time afterward.

The summer had been cool; but, as often happens after cool summers, the autumn proved unusually hot. It seemed as if the months had been playing a game, and had 'changed places' all round; and as if September were determined to show that he knew how to make himself just as disagreeable as August, if only he chose to do so. All the last half of Cousin Helen's stay, the weather was excessively sultry. She felt it very much, though the children did all they could to make her comfortable, with shaded rooms, and iced water, and fans. Every evening the boys would wheel her sofa out on the porch, in hopes of coolness, but it was of no use: the evenings were as warm as the days, and the yellow dust hanging in the air made the sunshine look thick and hot. A few bright leaves appeared on the trees, but they were wrinkled, and of an ugly colour. Clover said she thought they had been boiled red like lobsters. Altogether, the month was a trying one, and the coming of October made little or no difference: still the dust continued, and the heat; and the wind, when it blew, had no refreshment in it, but seemed to have passed over some great furnace which had burned out of it all life and flavour.

In spite of this, however, it was wonderful to see how Katy

gained and improved. Every day added to her powers. First she came down to dinner, then to breakfast. She sat on the porch in the afternoons; she poured the tea. It was like a miracle to the others, in the beginning, to watch her going about the house; but they got used to it surprisingly soon – one does to pleasant things. One person, however, never got used to it, never took it as a matter of course; and that was Katy herself. She could not run downstairs, or out into the garden; she could not open the kitchen door to give an order, without a sense of gladness and exultation which was beyond words. The wider and more active life stimulated her in every way. Her cheeks grew round and pink, her eyes bright. Cousin Helen and papa watched this change with indescribable pleasure; and Mrs Worrett, who dropped in to lunch one day, fairly screamed with surprise at the sight of it.

‘To think of it!’ she cried; ‘why, the last time I was here you looked as if you had took root in that chair of yours for the rest of your days, and here you are stepping about as lively as I be. Well, well! wonders will never cease. It does my eyes good to see you, Katherine. I wish your poor aunt were here today; that I do. How pleased she’d be!’

It is doubtful whether Aunt Izzie would have been so pleased, for the lived-in look of the best parlour would have horrified her extremely; but Katy did not recollect that just then. She was touched at the genuine kindness of Mrs Worrett’s voice, and took very willingly her offered kiss. Clover brought lemonade and grapes, and they all devoted themselves to making the poor lady comfortable. Just before she went away she said: ‘How is it that I can’t never get any of you to come out to Conic Section? I’m sure I’ve asked you often enough. There’s Elsie, now, and John, they’re just the age to enjoy being in the country. Why won’t you send ’em out for a week? Johnnie can feed chickens, and chase ’em too, if she likes,’ she added, as Johnnie dashed just then into view, pursuing one of Phil’s bantams round the house. ‘Tell

her so, won't you, Katherine? There is lots of chickens on the farm. She can chase 'em from morning to night, if she's a mind to.'

Katy thanked her, but she didn't think the children would care to go. She gave Johnnie the message, and then the whole matter passed out of her mind. She was surprised, a few days later, by having it brought up again by Elsie. The family were in low spirits that morning because of Cousin Helen's having just gone away; and Elsie was lying on the sofa, fanning herself with a great palm-leaf fan.

'Oh, dear!' she sighed. 'Do you suppose it's ever going to be cool again in this world? It does seem as if I couldn't bear it any longer.'

'Aren't you well, darling?' enquire Katy, anxiously. 'Oh, yes! well enough,' replied Elsie. 'It's only this horrid heat, and never going away to where it's cooler. I keep thinking about the country, and wishing I were there feeling the wind blow. I wonder if Papa wouldn't let John and me go to Conic Section, and see Mrs Worrett. Do you think he would if you asked him?'

'But,' said Katy, amazed, 'Conic Section isn't exactly country, you know. It is just out of the city – only six miles from here. And Mrs Worrett's house is close to the road, Papa said. Do you think you'd like it, dear? It can't be very much cooler than this.'

'Oh, yes! it can,' rejoined Elsie, in a tone which was a little fretful. 'It's quite near woods; Mrs Worrett told me so. Besides, it's always cooler on a farm. There's more room for the wind, and – oh, everything's pleasanter! You can't think how tired I am of this hot house. Last night I hardly slept at all; and, when I did, I dreamed that I was a loaf of brown bread, and Debby was putting me into the oven to bake. It was a horrid dream. I was so glad to wake up. Won't you ask Papa if we may go, Katy?'

'Why, of course I will, if you wish it so much. Only –'

Katy stopped and did not finish her sentence. A vision of fat Mrs Worrett had risen before her, and she could not help doubting if Elsie would find the farm as pleasant as she expected. But sometimes the truest kindness is in giving people their own unwise way, and Elsie's eyes looked so wistful that Katy had no heart to argue or refuse.

Dr Carr looked doubtful when the plan was proposed to him.

'It's too hot,' he said. 'I don't believe the girls will like it.'

'Oh, yes! we will, Papa; indeed we will,' pleaded Elsie and John, who had lingered near the door to learn the fate of their request.

Dr Carr smiled at the imploring faces, but he looked a little quizzical. 'Very well,' he said, 'you may go. Mr Worrett is coming into town tomorrow, on some bank business. I'll send word by him; and in the afternoon, when it is cooler, Alexander can drive you out.'

'Goody! Goody!' cried John, jumping up and down; while Elsie put her arms round Papa's neck and gave him a hug.

'And Thursday I'll send for you,' he continued.

'But, Papa,' expostulated Elsie, 'that's only two days. Mrs Worrett said a week.'

'Yes, she said a week,' chimed in John; 'and she's got ever so many chickens, and I'm to feed them, and chase them about as much as I like. Only it's too hot to run much,' she added reflectively.

'You won't really send for us on Thursday, will you, Papa?' urged Elsie, anxiously. 'I'd like to stay ever and ever so long; but Mrs Worrett said a week.'

'I shall send on Thursday,' repeated Dr Carr, in a decided tone. Then, seeing that Elsie's lip was trembling, and her eyes were full of tears, he continued: 'Don't look so woeful, Pussy. Alexander shall drive out for you; but if you want to stay longer, you may send him back with a note to say what day you would like to have him come again. Will that do?'