

"Why, I picked 'em, all right," replied Twinkle, sitting up and first rubbing her eyes and then looking gravely at her empty tin pail. "They were all in the pail a few minutes ago. I wonder whatever became of them!"

THE END

SUGAR-LOAF MOUNTAIN

Chapter I The Golden Key

TWINKLE had come to visit her old friend Chubbins, whose mother was now teaching school in a little town at the foot of the Ozark Mountains, in Arkansas. Twinkle's own home was in Dakota, so the mountains that now towered around her made her open her eyes in wonder.

Near by--so near, in fact, that she thought she might almost reach out her arm and touch it--was Sugar-Loaf Mountain, round and high and big. And a little to the south was Backbone Mountain, and still farther along a peak called Crystal Mountain.

The very next day after her arrival Twinkle asked Chubbins to take her to see the mountain; and so the boy, who was about her own age, got his mother to fill for them a basket of good things to eat, and away they started, hand in hand, to explore the mountain-side.

It was farther to Sugar-Loaf Mountain than Twinkle had thought, and by the time they reached the foot of the great mound, the rocky sides of which were covered with bushes and small trees, they were both rather tired by the walk.

"Let's eat something," suggested Chubbins.

"I'm willing," said Twinkle.

So they climbed up a little way, to where some big rocks lay flat upon the mountain, and sat themselves down upon a slab of rock while they rested and ate some of the sandwiches and cake.

"Why do they call it 'Sugar-Loaf?'" asked the girl, looking far up to the top of the mountain.

"I don't know," replied Chubbins.

"It's a queer name," said Twinkle, thoughtfully.

"That's so," agreed the boy. "They might as well have called it 'gingerbread' or 'rock-salt,' or 'tea-biscuit.' They call mountains funny names, don't they?"

"Seems as if they do," said Twinkle.

They had been sitting upon the edge of one big flat rock, with their feet resting against another that was almost as large. These rocks appeared to have been there for ages,--as if some big giants in olden days had tossed them carelessly down and then gone away and left them. Yet as the children pushed their feet against this one, the heavy mass suddenly began to tremble and then slide downward.

"Look out!" cried the girl, frightened to see the slab of rock move. "We'll fall and get hurt!"

But they clung to the rock upon which they sat and met with no harm whatever. Nor did the big slab of stone below them move very far from its original position.

It merely slid downward a few feet, and when they looked at the place where it had been they discovered what seemed to be a small iron door, built into the solid stone underneath, and now shown to their view by the moving of the upper rock.

"Why, it's a door!" exclaimed Twinkle.

Chubbins got down upon his knees and examined the door carefully. There was a ring in it that seemed to be a handle, and he caught hold of it and pulled as hard as he could. But it wouldn't move.

"It's locked, Twink," he said.

"What do you'spose is under it?" she asked.

"Maybe it's a treasure!" answered Chubbins, his eyes big with interest.

"Well, Chub, we can't get it, anyway," said the practical Twinkle; "so let's climb the mountain."

She got down from her seat and approached the door, and as she did so she struck a small bit of rock with her foot and sent it tumbling down the hill. Then she stopped short with a cry of wonder, for under the stone she had

kicked away was a little hole in the rock, and within this they saw a small golden key.

"Perhaps," she said, eagerly, as she stooped to pick up the key, "this will unlock the iron door."

"Let's try it!" cried the boy.