

ture to Katy, for her two baskets were big, well laden and heavy. A well-mannered young fellow sauntering by discerned her plight. He insisted on becoming her knight chevalier. That was the beginning of her acquaintance with Bruce Danvers.

He had been frank and open with her as to his prospects. "They depend upon my father just now," he told Katy, "but I can start out to earn my living independently if he objects to our engagement."

"Do nothing rash, dear," pleaded Katy, almost piteously, though, and he smiled at her fears and looked the valiant, whole-souled fellow he was, and she trusted him, and hoped everything would come out just as he predicted.

Then a fateful day came to Katy. She had not seen Bruce Danvers for a week, nor had she received a line from him. That did not worry her, for she never doubted his fidelity. It made her feel surely lonely, however. Everything went at odds that day, it seemed. She had to carry the baskets to Brocton, she was delayed in getting rid of her produce. There was another long wait in settling with a fractious merchant. It was dusk quite as she neared the entrance to the cut. She set down her baskets and rested on a fallen tree beside some bushes. Then she peered through the interlacing branches, for the sound of voices attracted her and a startling declaration in the gruff tones of a man thrilled:

"Let's start, then," the accents fell distinctly upon her ear. "The express special reaches the bridge in forty-five minutes. She's carrying a full treasure chest and it's ours if we plant a few ties in time."

Katy sprang to her feet. In a flash she recognized the four men for what they were—train wreckers and looters. She formed a speedy impulse to hasten back to Brocton and give the alarm, but her fleeing form was seen.

"Stop her, whoever she is—been

spying on us!" roared out a sturdy voice.

The quartette started a slanting run towards the road leading into Brocton. Katy realized that even if not directly headed off, she would soon be overtaken. The cut—the handcar! It was less than 200 feet away. She left the baskets where they were, abruptly changed her course—and made the dash contemplated.

Zing! The closeness of a speeding bullet made her fair face blanch. Crackety-jangle! She set the propeller bars in action. She heeded not a second fusilade, nor the menacing threats of her pursuers. The dim dusk overtook her. The men left far behind. How far had her action defeated the plans of the plotters? Katy thought rapidly.

They might send a contingent down the cut after her, while others hastened down the main line to carry out their unholy work. Was there time to run the handcar the full length of the cut and cover the half-mile stretch to the main line? Katy feared not. Two-thirds of the cut route covered, she jumped to the ground and ran up the sharp incline leading to the higher levels, a mile in width, then the deep gap just beyond the bridge.

Katy knew what she was about, and raced like an expert runner. She arrived breathless and tottering at the edge of the gap. There was a farmhouse 500 yards distant, but Katy could afford to waste no time. All along the edge of the gap were little cocks of hay, cured and dry as tinder. A country boy stood leaning on his pitchfork, lighting his pipe. Katy ran up to him.

"Quick!" she fairly ordered, "give me a match."

"You—you—you don't smoke?" gasped the astonished bumpkin, but he produced the article asked for.

Katy grasped the fork. She struck the match on its handle, dropped it in a heap of hay, lifted the blazing