

HOW SAMMY WENT TO CORAL-LAND

Introduction

by Emily Paret Atwater

“Well, children,” said grandma, “which shall it be, fairy stories, stories about giants, or ‘really truly,’ stories?”

They had been spending a month at the seashore, grandma, Bob and Eleanor. Little Bob had been very ill in the spring, and when hot weather came the doctor ordered sea air and sea bathing to bring back color to the pale cheeks, and strength to the thin little body.

But Bob’s father was a poor country parson and there seemed no way to fill the doctor’s prescription. At this juncture grandma, like the charming fairy godmother that she was, appeared on the scene. She knew a quiet spot (one of the few still in existence), where there were no big hotels, no board-walks, and no merry-go-rounds. It was the very place where she wanted to go to get rid of her rheumatism; Bob and Eleanor should go with her, and their father and mother could follow later when the parson’s vacation came.

It took but a short time to carry out this delightful plan, and at the opening of my story the children had already been a week at the seashore. Such fun as they had been having bathing, digging in the sand, gathering shells and seaweed, or sitting quietly with grandma under the big umbrella, watching the waves break and roll up on the shore! And after supper there was always that pleasant half hour, on the little balcony overlooking the ocean, when grandma told her bedtime stories.

They were all sitting there on this particular evening, grandma in her big rocking-chair, and Bob and Eleanor on their favorite cushions at her feet. The little folks had been begging for their usual treat, for grandma’s stories were delightful, and her fund of knowledge (to the children), quite limitless.

“I’m getting too old for fairy stories,” said Eleanor, who was eleven and had advanced ideas. “Only real little children believe in goblins and giants, and I’m in the third reader now.”

“I like ‘em,” said dreamy, nine-year old Bob, “fairies and giants can always do things that just ordinary people can’t. Please do tell us some fairy stories, grandma.”

“No, true stories,” insisted Eleanor.



“How would it do to make a compromise?” suggested grandma. “You were asking me some questions yesterday about the shells, seaweed and all the fascinating things found on the shore. Suppose I tell you a story about all the wonderful creatures that live in the ocean? The part of it that tells how they live and grow, and get their food will be all true, and I think Eleanor will find it more marvelous than the make-believe part, which will tell about the adventures, and the conversations that our hero had with the strange creatures that he met with in his wanderings.”

This proposition was agreeable; the children settled themselves comfortably to listen, and grandma, with her eyes on a passing sail, began—