

A Surprise

By Margaret Wise Brown

SALLY and Rip waded up the stream every afternoon all that summer. And always they found the shining stones in the brook.

Soon the wind began to blow. The water in the mountain stream did not grow colder because it was always as cold as it could be. But the sun was not as warm in the sky. And it took a long time to get their feet warm in the sunlight. Early in the morning white frost was on the ground. Winter was coming.

"We can't leave our shining stones up here covered in the snow," said Rip. "Tomorrow we will carry them home and keep them in the kitchen window in the morning sun."

The shining stones would look beautiful on top of the snow. But not under the snow.

So the next morning they carried a basket when they waded up the stream. It was cold and they only found two new stones. The water of the brook was so cold they could not leave their hands in it for long. They grabbed at the stones when they saw them. They had to dart their hands into the water as quick as a fish. They couldn't feel much with their feet.

It took a long time in the sun on the dry rocks for their feet to feel like feet again. It was a soft, warm sunny day, but the sun was not hot. The baskets were heavy with the shining stones in them. But they carried them home. They put the shining stones in the kitchen window, where no one could reach the basket to knock it over.

Then they went out to help their father pick apples. All the men were busy picking the big round apples and putting them in boxes. Rip and Sally climbed the highest part of the tree and handed the apples down.

The men were too heavy to climb as high as Rip and Sally could climb.

Their mother was cooking lunch. She did not have any dessert. Everyone was tired of eating apples and apple pie. Then she saw the baskets in the window.

She thought: "Rip and Sally have picked some mountain berries. We will have those for lunch when the men and the children come home from work." She did not look in the baskets.

It is a surprise that they have brought home," she thought. "And I might as well be surprised, too." Sally and Rip often brought home surprises for dessert. Sally and Rip and the men were hung after their tree climbing and picking apples. They ate their lunch and then waited for dessert.

"Well," said their father, "have you left your stream for the winter?" Then a noise came from the kitchen window.

"What is this!" Their mother put the baskets on the table and let the shining stones fall out. "This is a fine dessert!" she said. The stones caught the noon sunlight there on the table.

"Jiminy crickets!" said their father, "do you know what you have there all mixed up with the pebbles?" asked their father a old man who wouldn't look at it said that it was Fools' Gold," said Sally But we played that it was real gold and the red and green rocks and the white rocks are rubies and emeralds and diamonds, "You played it was real gold" said their father. "Yes," said Rip. "we played it was real gold. Why? gold. Why?"

It is real gold," said their father, "or I am a jack rabbit. In your brook that comes down from the mountain there is gold and you have found it."°

Then their mother laughed and laughed.
And who do you think owns all that gold?"
she asked.

"Jiminy crickets!" said their father.
Rip and Sally own that gold. | gave them that
brook that flows down from the mountains forever.
And they played that it was real
gold! Ha! Ha! Ha! "

He held the Stones in his hand. He
spread them out in a bowl.
The little gold ones were heavy and they
fell to the bottom when he shook them up
in his napkin. Then he brushed aside the
colored stones and just kept the gold in his
hands. "Nuggets of gold," he said. "Bring
me the scales,"
Are there more where these came from?"
As many as we could pick up while we
were wading this summer."
Jiminy crickets!"
He put the gold on the scales. Do you
Know how much gold you have here?" he
said. You have five pounds of gold. You
probably have several
hundred dollars worth of gold."
Jiminy crickets," said Sally and Rip.
And I gave away a gold mine. said their father.
Their mother laughed and all the
men at the table roared with laughter.