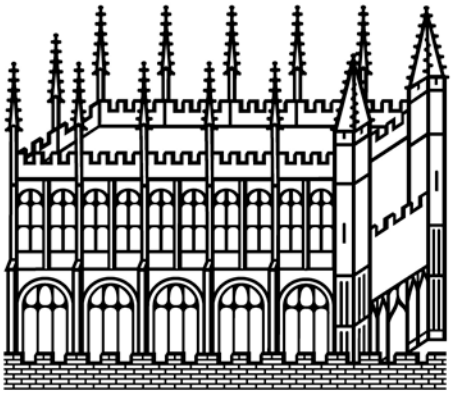
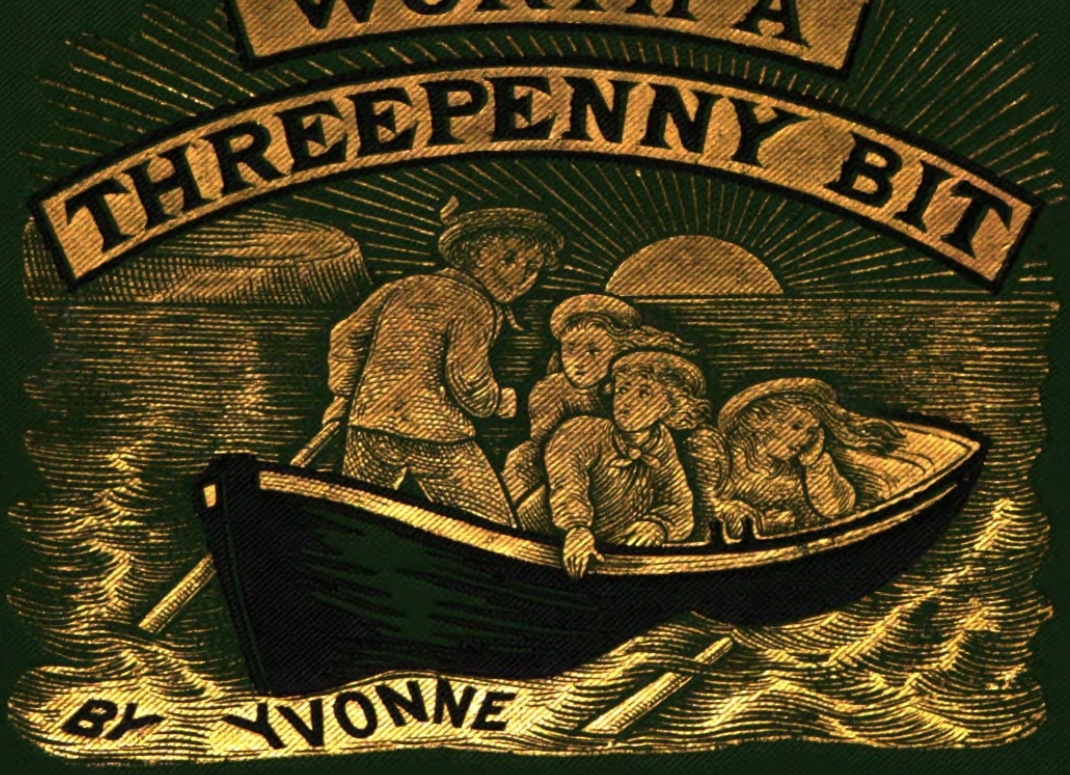


WORTH A THREEPENNY BIT



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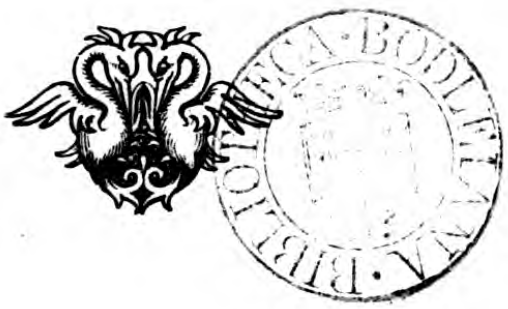
"WORTH A THREEPENNY BIT!"

"What's the matter now? said he, taking her up in his arms and kissing her."

"WORTH A THREEPENNY BIT!"

By YVONNE.



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To Dora,

Hoping she will like to read about the Children
she has so often heard of.

To Dora,

Hoping she will like to read about the Children
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CONTENTS.

"Worth a Threepenny Bit."

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT ARRIVAL AT CRANBERRY HALL.

"GENERAL, what do you think the children have been doing?" General:

"Well, my dear, what is it this time?" General Weisell said from behind the *Times*. He had opened the sheets wide, and was taking a first glance at the telegrams. Breakfast was on the table, and little Mrs. Weisell was almost as much concealed by the urn as the General was by his paper. But she was determined, if not seen, to be heard, and after speaking she paused.

"General," she repeated in gentle tones—she

was a very gentle old lady—"I don't think you are attending to me."

"No, my dear, I wasn't," her husband said, folding up the *Times*. "Begin again, and I 'll listen. What has Bob been doing now?"

"Well," Mrs. Weisell began, hesitating, "I fear it is his fault, and that he leads the others into mischief."

"Six of one and half a dozen of the other," the General said. "I expect that 's about it, as far as Dick is concerned."

"Perhaps so," his wife replied; "and they have such spirits, we mustn't be too severe. You know, my dear, they all had new boots; and what must they do, after their return from the cottage, when we were at dinner, but wade into the pond—they did indeed—to pick some of the lilies; that was the excuse."

"A good thing for them the pond is not deep," the General said; "but a ducking would have done them good. Well, you must buy them some new boots; that 's my advice."

"Yes, my dear; but I think it would be well if you just spoke to them on the subject."

"Well, you know, I expect you and Bounce to keep them in order, and that's the truth. Enforce it with the rod, if you can't do it any other way. That was what it was in my time," General Weisell said, looking far from as fierce as his words.

"And a very sad time it was, from all I have heard you say," Mrs. Weisell rejoined softly.

"Then do it your own way, my dear; but I'm not much of a hand at speaking, as you know; still I've kept order in my time, and it is hard if I am to be beaten by my grandchildren at last;" and he laughed good-humouredly.

There was a tap-tap at the door, answered by Mrs. Weisell.

"Come in, whoever you are," she said, and a bright-faced little girl appeared.

"Please, grandmamma," she said, "may we take up some of the flowers in the beds in the front, and plant them in our gardens in the orchard?"

"The flowers in the beds in front! Take them up!" Mrs. Weisell exclaimed, with increasing agitation. "What could make you think of such a thing, my dear? No indeed, you must not touch them."

"The others sent me to ask," the little girl said.

"There, then, you've got your answer to take back," the General observed. He put his hand under her chin, and raised her fresh face, and gave it a kiss; and then he popped a piece of toast and marmalade into a not reluctant mouth.

"Then we really mustn't," came as soon as words were possible.

"No, my dear, most certainly not;" and the little girl left the room very crest-fallen.

"Such an idea to enter into their heads!" Mrs. Weisell said, as soon as the door was closed. "I must go out and see what they are doing, and make sure there is no mistake."

"No, no; stay in and finish your breakfast. They are all right."

"My dear, I have done. I'll just pour out your second cup—you know you like it to wait—and I will be back to hear you read."

Mrs. Weisell left the room, crossed a pleasant, cool hall, and stepped out on the lawn. It was a beautiful summer morning. No one was to be seen in front of the house, and she walked round to

the side where the drawing-room windows opened to the ground, and where there were many flower-beds. There, plain enough to be seen, were her grandchildren. Dick, lying on the grass on his back, was wrestling with Bob, who was trying to prevent him getting up; and Jenny and Dolly were pulling not very gently for the possession of a rake.

"It's my turn to have it, Jenny; you know it's my turn," Dolly was saying.

Jenny was the first to observe Mrs. Weisell's approach.

"Get up, boys," she said; "get up;" don't you see grandma'?"

"Don't fight, my dear boys," Mrs. Weisell said; "please don't fight," and they struggled up from the ground.

"We are only having a tug," Dick replied. "There, that's for you;" and taking Bob at unawares, he tripped him up, but, unable to shake him off, they both rolled again on the grass together, laughing loudly. Jenny and Dolly joined in, and Mrs. Weisell also. It was such good-tempered play, if it was a little rough.

"But, my dears," their grandmamma said, "it is time now for you to be off to school. Go and put yourselves quite tidy, and don't keep Miss Straight waiting for you."

"Not go before the time, grandma', please," little Dolly said.

"It is the time, Dolly," Dick exclaimed; "now you are trying to get off your work."

"No, I 'm not," she returned indignantly.

"Miss Straight I you hate," Bob shouted at the top of his voice.

"No, you don't," Jenny said; you know you like her. You know she is very kind."

"Little girls," began Dick, "should be"——

But Jenny and Dolly had rushed out of hearing of a saying they felt a great dislike to, so Dick did not find it worth while to finish his sentence, but followed them at a slower pace with Bob; and Mrs. Weisell returned to the breakfast-room, well pleased to feel her four grandchildren were disposed of for a time. You will wish to hear more particulars of them, as my story is to be all about them. Bob was nine, and Dick eight years old.

Jenny was seven, and Dolly, the youngest of the family, was not far from her fifth birthday. Jeannette and Dorothy were the names that had been given to the two little sisters; but their brothers had dubbed them Jenny and Dolly, and no one for the present called them anything else. Bob and Dick had the names that might be supposed to belong to them; but to avoid confusion they are likely always to be known as Bob and Dick Weisell. Their father was christened Robert Richard, and in his case no one had decided which name should be used; and so it had ended in his being called sometimes by the one and sometimes by the other, and occasionally by both. And "that must not happen again," old Mrs. Weisell said, "it causes so much inconvenience, and so many explanations." Cranberry Hall, General and Mrs. Weisell's home, was as pretty a country house as you can imagine. The house itself was spacious and roomy, and the garden a large one. There was a wide lawn, and shrubberies beyond, in which was the pond you have heard of. Then there was a kitchen garden and the stables. Not far off was

a wood, also belonging to General Weisell. To please his wife's fancy he had built a pretty little cottage, on a bit of ground he had cleared in it for that purpose, and in this cottage lived Miss Straight. She was an old friend of General and Mrs. Weisell's, and a very clever lady, and she had been pleased to undertake for a time the education of their four grandchildren. I will only tell you that she was very fond of children, and knew a great many things much better than most people do, as that is sufficient to show you how capable she was of the task she had undertaken. General and Mrs. Weisell had only one child, their son who was in India, and they were delighted with the possession of four grandchildren, and had long looked forward to their coming. Mrs. Bounce, who had lived a long while with them, and was now their housekeeper, had not looked forward with so much pleasure to the event; but still she had consented to look after the young gentlemen and ladies' wardrobe, and, with Ann under her to follow her orders, to be herself the responsible person. She little knew what she was undertaking.

It was only about a fortnight since the children had arrived, having travelled all the way from Bundelcund, where they had left their parents. It had been a stirring day at Cranberry, the one on which they made their appearance; for they came unexpectedly, owing to a telegram which was to have been sent being forgotten.

However, tea was prepared for them at once in the breakfast-room, and they were made welcome. General and Mrs. Weisell were out taking a drive, and every one was so busy that for a time they were left to wait on themselves, which was a great treat. Dick said it was so much better than being "bothered about;" and one of Bob's first exclamations was, "This is jolly; shan't we like being here, that's all!"

Presently Mrs. Bounce came in. She had only just returned from a walk to the neighbouring town, and was greatly surprised to hear of the arrival during her absence.

"That's Mrs. Bounce—must be," Dick said, nudging his brother.

"How do you do, Mrs. Bounce?" Dolly said,

looking up brightly. "Have a piece of cake?" she added.

"No, thank you, my dear," Mrs. Bounce replied with some dignity; "I have had my tea."

Mrs. Bounce was a person of much importance at Cranberry Hall, and her imposing manners had become quite natural to her.

"How could you ask her to have some cake, Dolly?" Jenny said, when she had left the room. "She didn't like it."

"Not like cake?" Dolly answered. "That 's funny, and it is a particular good cake too."

"You are quite right there, Doll," Dick observed, as he helped himself to a second piece.

When Mrs. Bounce came in again she said, "Your room is not quite ready yet, young ladies; but I 'll just brush your hair, Miss Jenny, before you all go and see your grandpapa and grandmamma;" and forthwith she began with brush and comb on Jenny's very tangled locks.

Bob and Dick were meanwhile arranging the chairs for a steeple-chase. This was more than Mrs. Bounce could allow, though she did not wish

to be too strict on the first evening. She said, however, decidedly, that such things could not be done in the breakfast-room, that dessert was in, and that they had better go at once to the dining-room, and their sisters would follow them there.

"Oh, dear, you do pull so!" Jenny exclaimed with a sigh, as the comb came to a stand-still in her yellow hair. "I wish my hair was as easy to do as Dolly's. Oh! and papa said I wasn't to have it combed at all! He said it ought only to be brushed like a pony's tail."

"I knew how to brush and comb hair, Miss Jenny, before your papa was born," Mrs. Bounce remarked.

"Before papa was borned!" Dolly exclaimed, looking up with surprise written on her face. "Then you must be very old indeed. I wonder how old?" she added reflectively.

Mrs. Bounce made no reply to this half-question.

"Stand still, Miss Jenny," was all she said, as she finished quickly what she was about, and tied the blue ribbon. "That must do now," she added, "and I must speak to your grandmamma about having your hair cut."

Then she dismissed them to the dining-room, telling them to lead each other's hands.

"No, no; I shall be there first," Dolly cried, as she rushed off, Jenny following, but not quickly enough to overtake her.

The children found later that their bedrooms were side by side, and that there were two little beds in each. By their grandmamma's kind care, all had been very prettily arranged, and they were delighted with everything, Dolly especially so with her bed.

"Such a much bigger one than in the cabin," she said.

"Yes, big enough for such a big person as you are even," Dick answered.

Dolly knew well enough she was being laughed at, a thing she particularly disliked.

"If I am little, I can't help it," she said, "and I expect you were littler than I am once."

"Young ladies and gentlemen, it is time to go to bed," a voice sounded from below. "Ann is coming to you, and you can show each other your rooms to-morrow."

"Bother, that's old Bounce!" Bob exclaimed. I don't like her; but grandpapa and grandmamma, they are bricks."

"I am sure grandmamma is as sweet as figs," Dolly said heartily.

"There's Dolly thinking about eating, as usual," Dick observed.

"Well, figs are much nicer things than bricks," Jenny said, taking Dolly's part, as she often did; "and you needn't laugh at people, Dick. It's very stupid, and you like figs as much as she does."

There was no time to finish the discussion. Mrs. Bounce entered, and every one had to go to bed at once.

"Nice fine children, are they not, General?" Mrs. Weisell said to her husband that evening. "And after such a journey, so bright and lively. I did not expect it. I am quite proud of them."

And very lively children they proved themselves to be.

CHAPTER II.

"A MERRY MORNING, 'BUT WE PAY FOR IT."

THE children were only just in time for school on the bright summer morning I told you of. Miss Straight was expecting them. She showed them her watch, and it pointed to five minutes past nine.

"Better be five minutes before the hour than five minutes past," she said, "and that gives you time to take off your hats."

"It is such a pity to come in," Jenny said; "it is so lovely out, Miss Straight."

"Lessons first, and then play, Jenny."

"I know, I wish I was a squiddle," Dolly exclaimed; "they play all the time."

"Hark at her!" Dick said, "she calls it a squiddle; she means a squirrel."

"And so you are like a squirrel," Bob said, giving his little sister a kiss. She was his especial pet.

"We musn't have any more talking now," Miss Straight remarked; and, Dolly, you shall read about a squirrel to-day, and you will find they have to work as well as play."

That evening the children went to bed with the determination of getting up very early the next day. It was a whispered resolve from Dick to Jenny, as they parted for the night.

"You get up and dress, Dolly," he said, "and let 's be out by six. We have got the mustard and cress to sow, and lots of things. Grandma' gave them to Bob, and he is going to divide them. We 'll knock at the wall to wake you."

There was no time to say anything more. Jenny was very well accustomed to dress and undress herself, and her sister. On the journey from India their servant had fallen ill, and they had waited, with very little help, on themselves. Then Ann had plenty to do besides attending to them, and Mrs. Weisell particularly liked them to do as much as they could for themselves and others. As to

running messages and such little errands, nobody thought that any trouble at all.

Jenny was so anxious not to oversleep herself, that she was wide awake when the tap-tap at the wall came. Up she jumped, and with her slipper she tapped back again. That was to be the sign that she was not sleeping; but Dolly was soundly, and required a little shake before she opened her eyes.

"What is the matter, Jenny?" she said; "are we going away?"

"Going away? oh, no! We are going out early to sow our seeds. You wouldn't like to be left in bed."

"Oh, no!" Dolly said, springing up. "I'll be dressed in a minute."

"We must do it all properly," Jenny said; "we needn't make too much haste. The boys won't be ready yet."

They made a great splashing with their bath water; but this, as Dolly remarked, would only wash the carpet.

"It is very good of us to get up early," she observed presently.

"Why do you call it good?" Jenny asked, feeling some doubt on the subject.

"Why, grandpapa said it ought always to be early to bed, and early to rise."

"Yes; it makes a man healthy, and wealthy, and wise," Dick's voice answered at the door. Are you ready?"

"Nearly, only we haven't got our boots," Jenny answered, as she looked round the room for them.

"What shall we do? We mustn't go out in our slippers, that I know."

"We have got ours," Bob said, as he looked about in vain for his sisters'.

"We have said our prayers," Dolly was explaining to Dick; but we haven't unplaited our hair. Oh, there's the new goloshes!" she exclaimed, as a bright thought struck her that they were the very things that would do in the absence of boots. They searched, and found them in the cupboard. "You can't get wet in them, you really cannot, grandma' said so," Dolly remarked, as Bob put them on her feet. "But they are very big over my stockings," she added, "and so soft and cold."

"So they are," Jenny said.

"Never mind," Dick rejoined; "what a fuss you do make. You must keep them on somehow. Don't make a noise. We musn't wake everybody in the house, or we shall catch it."

"But we may tell we've done it," Dolly said.

"Oh, yes," Bob answered; "tell everything. I mean to tell as a surprise to grandma' at breakfast-time."

Bob and Dick had intended opening the drawing-room shutters, and letting themselves out in this manner; but that was not necessary; for Betty, the kitchenmaid, had got up very early to wash, and so they found doors open, and an easy way of getting into the garden. Betty stared with wide-open eyes and mouth, to see the young ladies and gentlemen following through the kitchen one after the other; but she had never been told to look after them, and in any case she was too much surprised to speak before they were out of sight and hearing. What a lovely morning it was. The birds were all singing or chirping, the flowers were bright and fresh, and the dew was glistening on every blade of grass.

"How much happier it is here than in bed," Dolly exclaimed; "ar'n't you glad we came out?"

"Yes, jolly," Bob answered; "but I should never have woke if the cock hadn't crowed just under our window; but come on, we must divide our seeds."

They sat down in a row on an old stump of a tree in the orchard, and Bob and Dick produced various packets from their pockets, and began separating them. There was mustard and cress, and sweet-pea, and mignonette, and lupin seed, and Bob divided them to every one's satisfaction. However, the doing it took rather a long time, and before they were all sown Dick said,

"Come, I 'm tired of this; let us do something else."

As every one seemed to agree, they rushed off to the shrubberies. A little stream of water that emptied itself into the pond was their favourite spot. Here they pretended to fish, and have boats of leaves and pieces of stick; in fact, there were no end of things they could amuse themselves with.

"Let's have one of your goloshes, Doll," Dick said, "and I'll show you how water-tight it is."

Dolly pulled one off in an instant.

"Oh, stop!" Jenny called; "it will be so wet for her to put on again." But she spoke too late; Dick was holding it up triumphantly full of water.

"Nearly caught a trout in it," he said; "only it whisked out."

"No; pour the water out of it, Dick," Jenny said; "Dolly can't stand on one leg so long."

"I'm not," Dolly replied; "I've got my foot on a dry stone."

Bob had been lying on the ground at some distance, fishing with his hand in the water. He came up at this minute, and a bell was heard in the distance.

"There's breakfast, I do declare. Why, it must be eight o'clock. Let's hurry. Put on your golosh, Doll. Why, it's all wet. I must dry it."

"Do," Dolly said; "it will be so uncomfortable."

"I'll put my handkerchief in it. There! Can you get it on like that?"

"Oh, yes! and I needn't run so carefully now to make it stop on."

"I'll put mine in the other," Jenny said, "because we must run fast. My goloshes are tight enough, I am glad to say."

Ann looked very grave when they came trooping into the breakfast-room.

"You must come and have your hair done, young ladies," she said; "you have been out very early. Did mistress say you might, Master Bob?"

"She said, Early to bed, and early to rise; at least grandpapa did."

No more was said. The children felt secretly glad that Mrs. Bounce, at any rate, did not think much of early rising, and that therefore they never saw her at the breakfast-hour. General and Mrs. Weisell took their breakfast later, when it was near the time for the children to start for school.

Usually, after their own breakfast, they went into the dining-room for morning prayers; but to-day General and Mrs. Weisell were absent from home, having been dining and staying the night at the house of friends in the neighbourhood.

The children determined they would start for school earlier in consequence, and have a little time to play in the wood. A good breakfast made them feel as lively as possible; and after a run through the field, and down the path in the wood, they all looked as rosy as apples. They always took care not to run too fast for Dolly, and if they left her behind, Bob was sure to turn back to give her a hand. Then they had each a bag of books to carry; so they soon stopped breathless.

"Lovely, isn't it?" Jenny gasped. "Let's go down there to-day. We've plenty of time, and we shall get to the stream."

"But it's such a bore carrying the books," Dick said. "Let's put them under a tree, and leave them. Nobody 'll touch them."

"Why, it's grandpapa's wood," Bob said. "They wouldn't dare to."

"Wouldn't nobody steal them?" Dolly asked. "I don't think we had better."

"Oh, Dolly, they are quite safe!" Jenny answered. "Besides, we can cover them up with brambles and t..ings."

Which they immediately did, forgetting the time they were spending, and that nine o'clock must be very near at the moment they were all scrambling down the ravine, in the opposite direction of Miss Straight's cottage.

"What fun!" Jenny said. "What a scramble we are having! I wonder we never came here before."

"There's such lots to do in the garden," Dick answered, "else the woods are the best place in the world. Come on, Bob. Shall you and I carry Dolly?"

"No, no!" Dolly protested. "I can walk quite well; only the brambles prick my legs."

"So they do mine through my stockings," Jenny said. "But Dolly is worse off. She has only got socks. Let us get down there by the water. That is where grandpapa said there were trout."

"Yes; and said we might catch as many as we liked," Dick replied.

"Catch them if you can; that was what he meant," Bob answered; but Dick was out of hearing. He had started off at a quick pace, and presently his voice was heard shouting:

"Come, come along! It is right down lovely! And there are strawberries, wild strawberries!"

"Oh, let's make haste!" Dolly exclaimed. And soon they were all four picking the red berries, and eating them, and searching for them deeper and deeper in the wood.

"Never mind the stream," Jenny said. "At least, let the boys go and fish. You come with me, Dolly." And the two little sisters, after picking as big bunches of flowers as their hands could hold, and eating strawberries till they were tired of hunting for them, sat down under a tree, and began fanning their hot cheeks with fern-leaves.

"Isn't it nice here?" Jenny said. "How I should like to live in a wood!"

"Miss Straight does," Dolly replied.

"Oh, but up there isn't half as nice as down here!"

"It is a long way off now," Dolly said. "I wonder when we shall get there."

"Why, the boys must have forgotten the time," Jenny replied. "It must be long past school-time."

"Then we are too late," Dolly observed.

But they neither of them felt inclined to get up just then, and run and look for their brothers. They stayed on, amusing themselves by gathering more flowers, till they heard Bob and Dick's voices calling them, and up they came breathless.

"I say, we shall get into a row!" was Bob's first exclamation. "Why, we've forgotten the time. It must be twelve, and past."

"What had we better do?" Jenny asked, after a moment's silence, during which they had looked in dismay at one another.

"We had better go as quick as we can," Bob said decidedly, "and find the books, and then go and tell Miss Straight exactly what we've been doing."

"Yes, that will be the best thing," Jenny replied, "to go and tell at once."

"It is a horrid long way to go," Dick said, "and not much good; for it is too late for lessons."

"I shall go," Bob answered.

"And so shall I," Jenny added.

"But it's a horrid bore, all the same," Dick remarked. "I wish we hadn't done it now."

Poor Dolly was, perhaps, more downcast than any one now the fun was over.

"I didn't think a bit we were being naughty" was all she said, as they toiled up the ravine.

The going down had been much easier, and they slowly wound their way, a very tired, silent little party. You would hardly believe the trouble they had to find the tree they had left their books under. They had forgotten to take any particular notice of it, and they had hid the bags so carefully that now, when all the trees looked alike, it seemed in vain to hope to find what they had mislaid. However, after a long search, Dick spied a bit of a leather strap, and this led to discovery. Bob said he would carry Dolly's bag, as she was tired, and Jenny and Dick each took one of her hands; and then, Bob in front and the three behind, they walked along, soberly and sadly, towards Miss Straight's cottage. She was in, and they were shown into the drawing-room, not the room they usually went into, where they did their lessons. Miss Straight was writing a letter. She rose to meet them, and I think she guessed what had happened, and felt it was best for her to speak first.

"You all look very tired and hot," she began. "Sit down. I have been expecting you all the morning."

"Please, what o'clock is it?" Bob said.

"It is half-past one."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" Jenny exclaimed, "how sorry I am!"

"Yes, we are all very sorry," Dolly repeated sadly.

"Then this is the state of the case, Miss Straight said; "you have been playing at truant."

"What's playing a-chuant?" Dolly asked quickly.

"Staying out larking, instead of going in and working," Bob answered briefly.

Miss Straight smiled.

"Well," she said, "I am not going to scold very much. I feel sure you will not do this again."

"No, we won't," they replied with one voice.

"You have rather frightened your grandmama," Miss Straight said, "and I must send a message directly to say you are here. When you did not come, I went to the house, thinking you must be ill. She was not in; but I met the carriage after-

wards, and told her I had not seen you. She was going to send at once for your grandpapa, who was in the town; but I persuaded her not to do that. I was sure you would soon appear. Too many to be lost. She was, however, sending the servants to look for you when I left, about half an hour ago."

"Let Dick and I run home, and we 'll come back for our work."

"No, Bob, that is not necessary; I will send, and you must all have some dinner. I said I would keep you, and I am sure you must be hungry." So they went upstairs to wash hands and faces, and then they went into a pretty little parlour, where they found some dinner ready for them. Miss Straight came in after they had finished.

"It is too late for regular lessons to-day," she said; "but I wish to give you longer afternoon lessons than usual. I want you to remember you have played at truant. I should like you when you get home each to go into a separate room, and to learn them very carefully for me to-morrow."

"But I don't do any afternoon lessons, Miss

Straight," Dolly said. "What must I do to be punished?"

"Well, Dolly," Miss Straight answered, smiling and kissing her, "you see you will miss your brothers and sister very much, and that will be punishment enough, I think, for you. Now get your books; be quick."

And every one ran cheerfully to do so. They felt the decree of longer lessons than usual a just one, and no one ought to mind submitting to a penalty they justly deserve. The lessons set, they wished Miss Straight good-bye, saying they would be sure to be in good time to-morrow. Then, following her directions, they walked quietly home, to tell their story to their grandmother.

CHAPTER III.

ALL THE FUN OVER.

MRS. WEISELL was sitting in her drawing-room when her four grandchildren entered. Her anxieties had been set at rest by the message she had received from Miss Straight, but she was none the less delighted to see them appear. They did not come in in their usual way, the one Mrs. Bounce so highly disapproved of, pushing over each other, and, so to say, making their appearance with a rush. This time it was a quiet entrance, and the door shut gently behind them.

"My dears," Mrs. Weisell said at once, "I am glad to see you back again. Dear, dear, this has been a sad day. How did it happen?"

"Oh, grandmamma, the wood was so lovely," Jenny began.

"And we didn't mean to be so long," Dolly went on.

"And we forgot," Dick put in.

Bob alone said not a word. He stood still, looking rather red, and ill at ease, and he muttered something about no good making excuses, which his grandmamma overheard.

"I think it is no good making excuses," she said. "We must hope it will never happen again, as grandpapa and I always trust you. I told Miss Straight to act in any way she thought proper. Has she given you any lessons?"

"Yes, we've got them," Dick answered.

"And we are to go into separate rooms and do them," Jenny added.

"And while I think of it, my dears," Mrs. Weisell said, "I do not wish you to get up so early in the morning. The boys may, but you must wait, Jenny and Dolly, till Ann calls you, which I have told her to do at twenty minutes to seven. I hope you will not have caught cold by going out without your boots; however, I am not going to scold about it, as I gave you no express orders on the subject."

It was a good thing Mrs. Weisell did not say more just then, for as it was Jenny left the room with her brothers, looking ready to cry with vexation. Dolly, thus without her companions, seated herself on a stool, with a very melancholy little face.

"My dear, I am afraid you are very tired," her grandmamma said.

"No, grandmamma, I'm not tired," she answered in a despondent voice.

"Get some of your picture-books, and look at them, my dear."

"No, thank you, grandma'."

Mrs. Weisell, not knowing what else to suggest, took up the book which she had laid down by her side, and began to read. Some time had passed, when the sound of a sob was heard in the silence.

"What is it, deary?" she said, putting her hand on the little head by her knee.

"Oh, grandmamma," Dolly answered, and the tears she had struggled with in vain ran down her cheeks, "I wish I was punished too, then I should have something to do."

"But the others are older than you, Dolly, and they were more to blame."

"Then I wish I was old too."

"Well, I will tell you what to do," Mrs. Weisell said. "Grandpapa will soon be here, and he likes to be met. Now, you be the first to see him. Take your little chair, and sit out on the lawn, or else walk up and down quietly to the gate and back, whichever you prefer, but don't run about much. You have had enough running to-day." Dolly's face brightened at once at the suggestion. She dried her eyes, and put her hat on.

"So I will, grandma'," she said, "and I don't like walking up and down slowly at all. That 'll quite punish me."

"Very well, deary, then go now."

And away Dolly ran; but by the time she was outside she remembered the orders she had been given, and for the next five minutes you might have seen her walking up and down quite quietly. Sometimes she would forget, and hop along on one foot, in a way she was particularly fond of doing. Then she would suddenly remember and

stop herself. By-and-by out flew a little bird at a distance from a bush, and away she scampered across the lawn to see if it had left a nest. But no, there was none that she could find, and back she went, very concerned at her want of memory. I must go slower than ever to make up for it, she thought.

Luckily, General Weisell was not very long in making his appearance, or Dolly's patience would have been severely tried. There he came in the distance, very tall, and very upright, stepping out like the soldier he was. What a good thing to be tall, Dolly said to herself; then you can be seen such a long way off. Dick says I am so small; but I hope I shall grow tall. I shouldn't like when I 'm big to be little, like grandmamma. Then I shouldn't feel I was grown up. I dare say he can't see me even now. Shall I go behind a tree and frighten him? No, I won't, 'cause I must walk slowly, and not play.

General Weisell did perceive very quickly the small figure coming towards him, in a brown holland frock and jacket. He was very fond of the

little round face with grey eyes that was to be seen under the sailor hat, with the brown hair that was so tightly plaited of an evening that it frizzed out all round it. He was extremely surprised to see such a sober little face, and to find his little grand-daughter by herself.

"What's the matter now?" he said, taking her up in his arms and kissing her.

"Oh, grandpa', how high you lift me when you take me up," she exclaimed; "why don't you know, no of course you don't know it yet. We've all been *very* naughty?" and she patted his whiskers as she spoke, as if to gain his full attention to so important a fact.

"Naughty? What about?" he said, kissing her again.

"We've been playing at tru-ant." Dolly had got the word right now, and she pronounced it slowly and with emphasis.

"What, not doing your work, like good boys and girls?"

"Playing in the woods instead," Dolly answered, nodding her head as she spoke. "And, oh, grand-

papa, such lots of strawberries! such lovely ones we eat! But we've been punished since," she said. "The others are doing their lessons now, longer ones, and I am walking up and down without running. Grandmamma told me to."

"Then I dare say that'll make you good for the future."

"Yes, I think so; but I must walk, grandpapa, you musn't carry me. Let me lead you. Grandmamma told me to go and meet you." And so they went in together into the house, and, a welcome sound for the prisoners upstairs, the tea bell was ringing as they entered, and away Dolly rushed to find her brothers and sister. Jenny was the first she found. She was in their room upstairs, and was just putting away her books.

"Oh, Dolly, what a time I have been learning my lessons!" she exclaimed. "I never knew them so dull, and so long, and so stupid before; but then they were longer than usual. I thought I should never be sure that I knew them quite perfect."

"It has been a long time," Dolly answered with a sigh.

"Certainly," Jenny went on, "if it was fun at the time, it has been very stupid since. I can't think why we did it. I shall be very glad when it's bedtime. Then we can go to sleep, and forget it."

"Yes, we shall have forgotten it all by the morning," Dolly replied hopefully; "so will everybody; but we are going to have tea and dessert first. Hark, there's Bob! Come along; the bell has rung."

Jenny's books out of sight, she seemed to forget the trouble they had cost her, and after all they assembled a merry party. It was so delightful to meet again; but Bob and Dick made exactly the same complaint as to the length and weariness of the lessons they had been plodding through.

Now, Mrs. Bounce had not seen the children all day; but she had certainly heard of everything that had happened from the getting up early to the not going to school; and when they were all at tea, in she came, evidently with the intention of speaking on the subject. It was no use Dolly saying, "Where have you been, Mrs. Bounce, to-day?"

Indeed, it was rather an unlucky remark; for it led to an opening. "Been at home, Miss Dolly," she answered; "the best place for people to be who have nothing good to do abroad."

Mrs. Bounce always spoke in this style when she wished to be most impressive, and the children knew she was going to talk in what Dick called the "stupidest way in the world."

"I am very sorry to hear what you have all been doing," she went on. "Sad indeed you should behave like this, and frighten your dear grandmamma."

"We've been punished," Dolly interrupted boldly, "all of us; and we've been scolded twice, haven't we?"

"Twice too often," Dick said.

"Master Dick, I am surprised at you," Mrs. Bounce began. Most happily, Mrs. Weisell's bell rang three times at this moment—a signal that Mrs. Bounce never disregarded; and so she went, leaving rather a chilling influence behind her, though Dick shrugged his shoulders, and said, "It's not her business."

"I wonder if grandpapa will say anything at dessert," Jenny said presently.

"I've told him all about it," Dolly replied, brightening up at the recollection.

"And what did he say, Doll?" Bob asked.

"He didn't say anything hardly. He didn't seem to mind, not a bit."

"Women make such a fuss about everything," Dick said; "men don't."

"I am sure, Dick, you make a fuss sometimes," Jenny replied.

Bob did not rouse himself to say anything further. He steadily and silently finished his tea, and left the table.

"I think Bob is very sorry," Jenny said, as she and her sister went upstairs to change their frocks for the evening. "I believe he thinks he was the eldest, and ought not to have let us do it."

"It is worst to be the eldest and the littlest," Dolly answered.

"Oh, no, Dolly! you had no lessons to do, you know. I wished I was you."

That evening they entered the dining-room in Mrs. Bounce's most approved fashion.

Four very grave faces! and they met Mrs. Weisell's, which was grave also; there was no mistake about that. She looked too, and the children quickly observed it, as if she intended to be grave, and felt that the occasion required it.

Their grandpapa appeared to be just the same as ever, and he kissed them all in turn, and then went on with a description he was giving Mrs. Weisell of a meeting he had been attending. He soon finished, and then he looked round at the assembled company.

"Bless me! what 's the matter with everybody?" he said. "What a lot of gloomy faces! I like smiles when I come home."

"But you know, my dear," his wife answered, "I have been telling you what a sad day we have had."

"To be sure; but it 's evening now. I can't keep things up; I never did. Sharp and quick; that 's the way. Now, go all of you and kiss grandmamma, and there 'll be no more playing at truant; that I am sure of. Now, will there?"

"No," Bob said decidedly; and "No," Dick repeated.

"We never will indeed, grandmamma," Jenny said.

"I never won't," Dolly exclaimed; "I never won't."

And while they were going round to the other end of the table, the General took the opportunity of putting fruit and biscuits in liberal quantities on the four plates at his side.

After that he began telling stories of the wars he had been in, and the curious things he had seen and heard of in foreign countries.

These were stories that never failed to interest, and were never all told; the General had seen and done so much in the days of his youth. The children listened with all their ears, Dolly having climbed upon grandpapa's knee, which she always considered her place at this time of day.

Every one was as sorry as usual when bedtime came. Indeed, it is quite certain the troubles of the day were entirely forgotten long before any one thought of going to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

"WE'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN."

HOWEVER, the day was remembered ever after to one good purpose. Nothing of the sort was likely to happen again, and great was Bob's relief to find on the following morning that they were to start as usual by themselves for their walk through the wood. It had been his great fear that some one henceforth would be sent with them, and the idea of being looked after was one that Bob hated more than any other.

General Weisell had soon decided that matter. "No, my dear," he had said, "trust them; that's my way. Boys can't be followed up at every turn, and the best thing they can have to do is to take

care of their sisters, and to feel that if one gets into a scrape all must suffer."

"Still, they are such children, and they run wild."

"Best thing they can do, my dear, till the boys go to school, and they 'll soon be ready for that."

"Dick is just eight."

"I went to school at six."

"And a very sad thing for you."

"I haven't turned out so badly, all things considered," the general replied.

"Certainly," Mrs. Weisell said presently, "they are all good children, and give very little real trouble; never happy apart, and never a quarrel between themselves that lasts more than a minute; "and it is a very good thing to begin life with a large stock of health and spirits."

"Nothing better," the general answered. "Don't you and Bounce put on the curb too tightly."

"My dear, you don't think we do," Mrs. Weisell said apprehensively, and then she determined she would not be too strict; such truthful, affectionate children, she said to herself, they deserve to be

trusted. At that moment there was a most startling noise overheard, thumping, and banging, and jumping. It lasted for some minutes, and Mrs. Weisell's hand was on the bell, when Dolly put her little head in at the door.

"Please, grandmamma, I was sent to say we won't make such a noise again; we forgot."

"Very well, my dear; another time try and remember."

"We are going out to do it," Dolly explained, and she was gone.

The days at Cranberry Hall passed pleasantly indeed to the children. School from nine till twelve, then home for the day, only their afternoon lessons to prepare, and the whole place when their work was over to enjoy themselves in. They climbed trees, and they had pets, dogs, rabbits, and cats; and their last present from grandpapa was a boat, in which of an evening, when their great friend Henry the footman was free, he taught them to row about the pond. There was not much space, still there was enough to learn to row in, and if you were very fond of being in a boat, there was

plenty of pleasure to be found in this one; and the water is simply not deep enough to be drowned in, everyone was sure to observe, or words to that effect, when Mrs. Weisell looked serious, as she always did when the boat was mentioned. She had not known this present was coming till it arrived, or I think it would have been stopped on the way. How much grandmamma loved her grandchildren, and thought of them, and prayed for their welfare, they did not know; but they loved her dearly, and to try and please her became more and more a pleasure of their lives.

It was with her that they every morning read the Bible, and Bob, and Dick, and Jenny said the verses she liked them to learn daily, and Dolly repeated her hymns. It was with her they always spent Sunday evenings, usually occupied looking over a large and very beautiful collection of Bible pictures, which grandmamma told the stories of, as the children thought no one ever told stories before.

She sometimes began them to Dolly alone, sitting on her knee; but the others were sure to leave

what they were doing and to cluster round. Bob and Dick would lean over on their elbows, and the book would be carefully lifted round that all might see equally well. Dolly delighted in every one's seeing and hearing.

It was a much greater pleasure than looking and listening by yourself.

"Come along, boys," she called, one Sunday evening, "Grandmamma is going to begin."

"Come along, boys," Bob repeated, laughing, as he put down the book he was reading, and came with his brother from the further end of the room.

"There, that's Ishmael!" Dolly said, "isn't it, grandma'. Poor Ishmael, he was so very thirsty."

"But he was very prosperous after that," Dick said.

"And he was a great hunter," Bob added.

"I should like to have been Ishmael."

"Then you wouldn't have been a Christian," Jenny remarked.

"We shouldn't have been so happy, should we, grandma'?" Dolly said, looking up into her face.

"No, Dolly, we have so much to be thankful

for, and most of all to God, for giving us His Son, to live and die for us."

Dolly was turning over the leaves. "That is our Saviour in the manger," she said reverently, as she stopped at a page.

"The wise men are offering Him their gifts," Jenny observed.

"Yes, they have just seen His star in the east," grandmamma said; "and learnt the good news, that the Saviour is born into the world."

"Don't turn over the pages so quickly, Dolly," Bob said presently.

"But I want to come to one that I don't know what it is. There!"

"Why, that is the prodigal son," Dick replied; "he is praying in the fields."

"Yes," grandmamma went on; "and his history teaches us how willing God is to forgive us for doing wrong, when we are truly sorry for it, and to receive us again as His children."

"Tell us all the story, please grandma'," Jenny said; "don't read it. You havn't told us a whole one yet."

And grandmamma told it to a very attentive audience.

Often the Bible stories led to others, the stories of "little soldier children," as Dolly termed them. Grandmamma could tell them of little children who had died in countries far away, whom she had taught, as she taught them, to read their Bibles; and she could tell them of many who had grown up, of the things that had happened to them long ago, and how she had been able to help them; and especially of the troubles of several little drummer boys she had known well, and whose names the children were familiar with. To these stories, "very true ones," as Dolly called them, they all listened with unflagging interest; and very happy those Sunday evenings were spent with grandmamma, and very quickly they went.

CHAPTER V.

SICK, BUT NOT SAD.

ONE morning, strange to say, when Bob and Dick got up, they felt as if they were so tired they would like to go to bed again. What could it mean? They would not give in at first, but presently Dick said,

"I 've got a headache; I shall lie down."

And then Mrs. Weisell was sent for, and she determined at once to send for the doctor, particularly as the little girls were not, she considered, looking at all well. The end of it was that every one was pronounced to be going to have the measles, and staying in bed was the order of the day. A most unpleasant order, for after a few

hours nobody felt much was the matter with them; and further it was Mrs. Bounce who established herself as nurse, and undertook to see that everyone had their medicine, and that nobody jumped out of bed to look out of the window, just to see if the dogs were unhappy, missing their companions, or if Benjamin was rolling the lawn. What a sad trial the children all thought it, to have to stay in bed three whole summer days!

Their grandpapa came up very soon to pay them a visit. They could hear his well-known step on the stairs, coming nearer and nearer.

"Well, what's the matter here?" he said, opening the first door. "Ah, Mrs. Bounce, you've got it all your own way at last. It's your fault if you don't keep order now."

"Indeed, sir, I do my best," Mrs. Bounce answered blandly. Even she was not proof against the general's cheerful manner.

"I give you my best wishes," he went on; "you've got a lively set of invalids, it seems to me. Fine rosy cheeks! In my time people didn't stay in bed for nothing."

"Oh, grandpapa! when you know we are *made* to stay in bed; and we can't help our faces being red. What are Carlo and Dash after?"

"Very much surprised at everybody being in bed such a fine summer morning."

"They are coming up to see us in the afternoon; grandmamma said they might."

"Ah, Mrs. Bounce won't allow that!"

"Yes, yes, she'll have to."

"Now I am going to see your sisters."

"Oh, grandpapa," Jenny exclaimed, "we are so glad you are come! It is so dull staying in bed; but Dolly says she likes it."

"I don't mind it so very much," Dolly said, "when I've got a pain in my head."

"That's a good little maid, lie still till you are better. I'm going out for a walk through the woods. Any message for Miss Straight?"

"Oh, yes," Jenny replied; "our love, and we hope she'll come and see us."

"And bring a story to read to us," Dick shouted from the other room. The General had left the door ajar, and the conversation could be overheard.

"Very well, I 'll tell her; now I 'm off. Be good boys and girls till I see you again."

"Grandpapa always says, Be good boys and girls," Dolly remarked, after apparently thinking the matter over for some time, "and yet he minds less than anybody when we are naughty."

"He isn't a bit particular," Jenny said; "but he means us to be good, I always know that."

Mrs. Weisell's visits upstairs were very frequent.

"Well, my dears, how are you all getting on?" she would say.

"Oh, grandmamma, so horribly dull!" Bob would answer.

"Such a dreadful bore to stay here," Dick chimed in.

"My dears, you must be very thankful you are not worse, and that you have kind people to nurse and take care of you."

"We don't want to be taken care of."

"Come now, that is very ungrateful. I shall go and see your sisters, and they will say pleasanter things than that to me."

"No, no, we are very much obliged; but don't send Bounce. We like Ann to wait on us."

Jenny and Dolly were rather worse than their brothers, and so they were more reconciled to their fate for the first day.

"I've been thinking of mamma and papa, Jenny," Dolly said that evening. "I wonder if they know we've got to stay here?"

"No; how could they?" Jenny answered. "Do you often think of them now, Dolly?"

"I think of them whenever I don't forget to."

"I think of them oftenest in the nights," Jenny said.

"What, when you are sleeping! How could you?"

"No, no, when I 'm awake. Hark! there 's Dick tapping. Answer him, Dolly."

They had made this grand amusement for themselves; and if you have ever been obliged to stay in bed with the measles, and been told you must not use your eyes when you felt you could see everything as well as possible, you will know that any little diversion to pass away the time is a great help. With sticks they tapped on the wall, and

so carried on conversation. Dick's bed was close to the wall on one side, and Dolly's on the other; so there was no difficulty. So many taps meant "no," and so many "yes," and so on. It was rather a slow process; but that was no disadvantage, as it took up all the more time.

Breakfast was sent up every morning to the hospital, as General Weisell called it, on four trays; and breakfast, dinner, and tea were important events in the day; for every one was tolerably hungry, and with so little to do, as Bob explained, "one must think about eating."

"Ann, some more bread and butter, please," Dick called one morning, hearing the sound of a tray passing the door. "Ann!"

But Ann, though perhaps she heard, did not wish to reply; and she had a good excuse for not doing so, since she was going downstairs for bread and butter, and was called as a rule so many times, it was not wonderful she sometimes lacked the patience to answer. Bob flew out of bed to the door—he was the nearest to it—and shouted aloud on Ann. There she was descending the staircase

below. It was a pity he had thrown his pillow to the foot of his bed, as it lay close at hand.

The temptation was too strong. He seized it, and threw it over the banisters. No aim had been taken; but the most telling shot could not have hit its mark with greater accuracy. Down it came on Ann's head, and it knocked the tray she was carrying completely out of her hands, scattering all that was on it far and wide, cups, milk-jug, plates, teapot. There was a crash of broken china; but far above it Ann's cries of alarm and despair.

"Whatever is it? What shall I do? Mrs. Bounce, come, come! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Dick was out of bed in an instant, and Jenny and Dolly peeping through their half-open door, with exclamations of "What is the matter?" before any assistance came to the unlucky Ann; but Mrs. Bounce and Mrs. Weisell were soon on the spot. The General always kept away from any sort of disturbance, unless, as he expressed it, he was "called out."

Ann redoubled her sighs, tears, and groans. "I

couldn't help it indeed, Mrs. Bounce; indeed I couldn't," she sobbed.

"Well, Ann, do not make such an unnecessary noise. It is an accident," Mrs. Weisell said, not fully understanding how things had happened.

"Such stuff," Dick was saying overhead, "to go into highstrikes, just because a pillow was shied at your head."

"I thought somebody was kilt," Dolly put in.

"Too much row for that," Bob rejoined.

"But who did it?" Jenny asked.

Mrs. Bounce caught the sound of the voices. She could guess pretty well who had done it.

"Go into bed, you naughty children," she called. "As soon as my back is turned you are in mischief. I never knew such children."

This was all that was heard; for every one scampered into their beds, and pulled the clothes over them, remembering for the first time that morning how particular they were to be not to catch cold. Mrs. Weisell came up presently to pay her usual visit.

"Grandmamma, I 'm so sorry I did it," Bob said before she had time to speak. "It was I did it all. I never thought it would hit her, or that I should break anything. I never thought what it would do; I just dropped the pillow over. Let me pay for the things that are broken."

"No, my dear, I will forgive you this time without that," Mrs. Weisell replied most kindly, not telling him how many things had been broken; for the sum required would have closed Bob's bank; but he heard of it afterwards, and blamed himself the more, remembering how kind her words had been.

"Did it frighten you very much?" Dick asked.

"No, my dear, not so very much; but poor Ann was sadly frightened and distressed, and, you know, she had reason to be so."

"I 'm so sorry," Bob repeated. "I won't do it again."

"No, my dear, or anything like it, I hope. You really must consider the consequences of such rash acts."

Nothing more was said on the subject, excepting

all that Mrs. Bounce found occasion to say. The general refused to interfere, observing that he had done the same sort of thing in his young days, and treating the whole affair as a joke.

To poor Ann it certainly had not been one, and it was with a very solemn face that she listened to Bob's apologies; nor did she ever henceforth carry a tray downstairs without looking up, apprehensive of possible pillows, and preparing herself to meet them better than she had done on a former occasion. "They were so wild and venturesome; she couldn't put faith in the young gentlemen," she said.

After this leave was soon given for every one to get up, and to meet again downstairs.

Measles do not appear to improve people's tempers. At any rate, it was astonishing what very little things every one felt cross about on that first afternoon, until Miss Straight put her head in at the door, and was hailed with delight.

"Ah, friends, how are you all?" she said. "I have been away from home, as I hope you have heard, or I should have been here before."

"We are so glad you are come," Jenny said; "we are dreadfully dull."

"And Dick is so cross," Dolly said.

"So are you," Dick retorted.

"Cos I feel so fidgety all over, and I can't help it," Dolly answered plaintively.

"Well, come on my lap, darling," Miss Straight said; "and I've brought books, if any one would like reading aloud."

"Oh, jolly!" Bob replied; "just what we do want. *The Swiss Family*—we've read that; but *The Little Duke.* Is that nice?"

"I think so. Shall we try it?"

All established themselves comfortably, and Miss Straight soon had a most attentive audience, with one exception. The story was a difficult one for Dolly, and her sighs soon showed she was not too happy.

"She can't keep still a minute," Dick said.

"I don't care about it," Dolly replied; "and the worst is, I don't know what a duke is."

Miss Straight explained as well as she could, and added: "But you shall have something to

amuse you. I've brought some pictures in my pocket to be painted. We'll pull the table nearer, and you can paint while we read."

This was soon managed to Dolly's complete contentment; and before the reading was ended, she was still more contented, having dropped asleep.

The first evening the children assembled at dessert, General Weisell remarked:

"Very pale faces, grandmamma, very pale faces. I think a run to the sea would do them good."

"Yes, my dear, I think it would," his wife replied.

"Oh, do, do!" the children exclaimed.

"We should row, and swim, and paddle," Dick went on.

"And where shall we go?" Mrs. Weisell said.

"We don't know any place but this and India," Dolly answered.

"Ah, too far off to go and see papa and mamma!" General Weisell said. "What do you say, my dear, to Swanage? Nice, quiet sort of place I

fancy it to be. They can run about and amuse themselves, and no bother of fine people."

"It is not a place I know," Mrs. Weisell answered doubtfully.

"And I've only heard it well spoken of," the General said. "But we'll go and try it," he added decisively.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE SEA! HURRAH FOR THE SEA!"

IF you have never been to Swanage, I should advise you to go there; that is, if you like bathing, and boating, and sunshine, and brisk winds, quiet folks to live among, and being ten miles from a railway. There are few houses to be had; so should you want one, you must bespeak it beforehand. General Weisell wrote and took rooms at once at the large hotel which faces the sea, and a most exciting week was spent at Cranberry in making preparations for the move there. Holidays were proclaimed necessary after measles; and besides every one's due through the month of August. Mrs. Weisell was rather sorry to find there would be such a long drive after leaving the

railway before reaching their destination; but the children thought it only an extra pleasure, and hoped they would have a coach and four horses. However, General Weisell told them all he had ordered was a fly and a good pair of horses, and that the luggage would go by the regular 'bus. Mrs. Bounce was not to be of the party. She preferred staying at home, and looking after everything; but Ann was to go.

"Aren't you jolly glad you are going?" Dick asked her, as she waited on them one morning at breakfast-time.

"Yes, Master Dick, I shall be very pleased to see the sea; I have never seen it," Ann replied most gravely.

"She doesn't seem glad much," Dolly said when she had left the room.

"She has never been so happy, I believe, since she had the pillow thrown at her," Jenny observed.

"Then she should forgive things," Dick said; "forgive and forget."

"I tell you what would make her forget," Dolly exclaimed.

"What is it then, Doll?" Bob asked.

"Why, give her a present, to be sure."

At this idea of Dolly's they all laughed.

"Have you any money left, Bob?" Jenny said.

"Have you got as much as three pennies?" Dolly asked.

Threepence was such a favourite sum of hers, that it had become quite a saying with the children, "Not worth threepence," though Dolly was oftener heard to say approvingly when she made a purchase that cost twopence, or perhaps less, "Why it 's quite worth a threepenny bit."

"I 've got a threepenny bit," Bob said, after hunting through all the pockets of his purse.

"But don't spend that," Dolly objected; "keep it for grandpapa's birthday. I 'll lend you three pennies."

"Why it 's all the same, Dolly; and I mean my present to cost more than that; but there is nowhere to buy anything here."

"Oh, but there 'll be a town at Swanage! Grandpapa said so," Jenny answered. "You can get it there."

And then Ann came into the room.

"It must be a secret," Dolly said, "that you are going to give it. Ah, yes—hush!"

Mrs. Bounce was much occupied with the packing up, and the children often found themselves in the way during those busy days before the morning for starting came, which it did to find every one quite ready. Dolly was sent upstairs with a last message from grandmamma about something that was not to be forgotten.

"It is put in, Miss Dolly," Mrs. Bounce answered. She was in a very gracious humour, and she added, "So you will be all off soon now?"

"Yes," Dolly replied, with a face of delight; "we are going for three whole weeks, and then you 'll see us all again."

"Indeed I shall," Mrs. Bounce said; and condescending to what was intended for a joke, she went on: "If I had my way, I 'd bundle you all back again to Bundelcund."

Dolly took it seriously, and to her feelings the speech was an injury.

"Then papa and mother would be very glad to

see us all come again; that I can 'sure you," she said with emphasis; "and I believe any body in the world would be gladder to have us than you are."

"Oh, no, Miss Dolly! I 'm very fond of good children."

"But people can't always be good," Dolly said; and she escaped to the garden to amuse herself as her brothers and sister were doing till the carriage came round, hunting for birds' nests.

Very soon they were off, and in the train, whizzing along, looking at everything to be seen from the windows, and rushing from one to the other; for somehow no sooner were two established at one end of the carriage than whoever chanced to be looking out at the other end was sure to observe some object of great interest, that everybody must have a sight of. Fortunately, they had no fellow-passengers; but Mrs. Weisell was obliged to remonstrate.

"My dear children, if you could keep a little quieter," she said. And then they tried to for a time, but not with much success.

"You know, grandmamma," Dolly said, "we must be quick, else it would be gone before we have time to see it."

The General read the papers, and at every station walked up and down, if only for a few minutes; for he was not fond of railway travelling, especially in close quarters, as he expressed it, with "such lively customers."

How the children envied him; but they were not allowed to get out. Mrs. Weisell entreated on this point.

"My dear, one or other of them will be lost if they do. At any rate, the little girls must stay with me."

"You can come with me, Bob," the General said at one station; and the other three, with their heads at the window, looked after them with longing eyes, and then began to watch the people hurrying to and fro.

"What a big man that is!" Jenny said. "I wonder if those are his dogs that he is leading."

"No; his master's, to be sure," Dick replied. "They are shooting dogs."

"Look at those poor little children in evenin'," Dolly said.

"In evening!" Jenny exclaimed. "What do you mean, Dolly?"

"Why," Dick said, laughing aloud, and rather contemptuously, "she means in mourning. Don't you see, they are in black."

"So I did mean that," Dolly replied in a hurt tone of voice; for no one likes being laughed at for their little mistakes.

"I dare say they haven't got any mother," Jenny said; "they look so sad."

"Or perhaps their father has been kilt fighting," Dolly suggested.

"Now, what nonsense you do talk!" Dick put in. "What can you know about it?"

"Dick, you are very cross and disagreeable," Jenny said. "Dolly and I may talk if we like."

"Hush, my dears!" Mrs. Weisell interposed. "What words do I hear? Here is your grandpapa coming. Now do not lean against the door."

The fly was awaiting them at Wareham, and Bob and Dick instantly climbed to the box-seat,

Jenny and Dolly loudly lamenting there was no room for them also.

"Have you got space for four passengers outside, coachman?" General Weisell asked.

"Well, no, sir; not quite."

"Then you must come in, little girls, and be content with grandpapa and grandmamma."

Bob and Dick coaxed the coachman into giving them up, unknown to Mrs. Weisell, the reins and whip, and greatly they enjoyed the drive, though Jenny and Dolly were delighted to be free again at Corfe, and for half an hour to run about among the ruins of the beautiful castle, and then on they went; and just as they came to the beginning of Swanage, Bob seized the whip, and slashed it in the air, and away the horses went with more spirit than they had shown at all. No doubt, they were thinking of the stable and oats which we must hope was in store for them.

"We are going too fast," Mrs. Weisell said. "I declare, General, Bob has got the whip. Do put a stop to it."

But it was too late. The coachman was superin-

tending, and it was with grand style that they drew up before the hotel. There was a wide flight of steps that led up to the front entrance. That evening it rained, which was annoying. Still, to see the sea from the windows, and imagine all they would do the next day, and run along the passages, and find out the way to their rooms, were amusements that filled up the time very well, and everybody slept that night as sound as a top.

"What fun, living at an hotel!" Dick said the next morning. "I am so glad we are not in a stupid house."

"And I have got some money from grandmamma," Jenny said, "and we are going out presently with grandpapa to buy some spades, and buckets, and anything we want."

And so they did, and they were as happy as possible when, having bought all they required, they went to the beach. General Weisell had arranged with a man to take the boys to have their bathe and first swimming lesson, and afterwards they rejoined their sisters. Jenny mean-

"We can't get it now; and how shall we ever get back with one oar?"

while, with Ann to attend on her, had been having a dip from a machine. Dolly had put on her bathing-dress with pride, and climbed bravely down the steps into the sea; but when she found herself really in it, and saw how very much water there was all around her, she felt certain, notwithstanding all Ann's protestations that she should "be taken care of, and shouldn't be drowned," that she was "too little," as she expressed it, "to be comfortable in the sea." Just one dip she was persuaded to take under the waves, and then when breath came, tears mingled with the salt water that ran down her face; so she scrambled back into the machine, and was very glad to be out of it; and paddling about on the shore, with her feet bare and her petticoats tucked up, from there she had an excellent view of Jenny, who was as brave as possible, and ducked under, and pretended to dive for stones, and floated and swam; so she fancied on this first occasion, just in nice shallow water, where she could help herself along with her hands and feet, on the soft, cool sand, how delightful it was! Dolly watched also with the deepest interest many little

children being taken out for a dip, some smaller than herself; and from these very often there came cries, and "Oh, I don't like it!" "I don't want to." "And that's very cruel to make them." Dolly said to herself, "They 'll drown them, and then they 'll be sorry for it. Mother wouldn't do that to me."

Far away from the sands the children found a most charming rocky cove, with a winding path leading down to it called the zigzag. Of an afternoon they liked this spot better than any other, and many pleasant ones they spent there, climbing and slipping about on the seaweedy rocks. The first thing they always did was to take off their shoes and stockings, and hide them in some safe corner till it was time to go home again.

Jenny had a great misfortune one day. They were sure they had stayed as late as they might, and that they ought to start immediately, and her shoes and stockings could nowhere be found. She fancied she knew the exact spot she had left them in. "It was there," she said; "no, there;" but still there they were not, and four pair of eyes were looking for them.

"What a bother," Dick exclaimed; "we shall be late. I vote you come along without them."

"But I can't walk with bare feet all the way to the hotel," Jenny objected.

"Why, it won't hurt you," Dick rejoined.

"But what 'll you do without your shoes and stockings to-morrow?" Dolly asked.

"Oh, there are plenty of others!" Dick replied.

"We must go, I think," Bob said, coming up. "I have looked, I believe, everywhere. What a pity it isn't Dolly, then we could carry her."

"No, I 'm too heavy," Dolly said, as they began going up the pathway.

"Why, you 'll never be too heavy to be carried," Dick observed.

"Not when I 'm a big woman? yes, I shall."

"How big are you going to be, Doll?" Bob asked.

"Why, just as big as mother."

"The gravel *is* so scratchy," Jenny said, "I don't like it at all."

"Then let 's try and carry you," Bob answered; and he and Dick crossed their hands and made a

sedan-chair, and Jenny mounted into it, and was carried a few paces. But she really was "too heavy," Dick protested; "and I'm sure I don't like it," she said, "so put me down, please."

"I'll lead your hand," Dolly exclaimed; and Jenny laughed and kissed her, and said she was a darling, for wishing to help anybody in trouble. However, on the grass a want of stockings and shoes was not so much felt, and to make up for lost time, they ran down the green slopes of the park, a nice piece of ground dotted with trees, which is not likely to be built over, and which is one of the prettiest features of Swanage, and one of which the little place is justly proud.

The children met General and Mrs. Weisell coming out for a stroll, and the General laughed heartily at Jenny's appearance, and told her it was lucky she had not Mrs. Bounce to face on her return to the hotel. Mrs. Weisell looked rather serious, and said that it must not happen again; they must take more care. "You must ask Ann to go out and get you another pair of beach boots," she added; "and I think to-morrow you may find

those you have lost. You have not been too near the cliffs, I hope?"

"No, not so very near," Bob replied.

"They are so dangerous, I do not like to trust you."

"Did you ever hear of anyone's tumbling over?" General Weisell said.

"Yes, grandpa'," Dolly answered; "one summer a cow did; it really did."

"Walking in its sleep," Dick said; "we don't do that."

"No, it wasn't walking in its sleep," Dolly replied, "it was daytime; but I believe it was blind, it must have been, musn't it, grandma'?"

"No, my dear, not necessarily; people have eyes sometimes, and don't use them, and no doubt it is the same with cows. Now run home. Tea is waiting, I know; and Jenny must put on some shoes and stockings at once. Good-bye; grandpapa and I are going to have a little quiet walk to the point."

CHAPTER VII.

"WE'D BETTER NOT HAVE DONE IT."

BOB found no difficulty in finding his present for Ann. He gave her a large pincushion covered with shells, of Dolly's choosing; and Ann was really delighted with it, and said she should keep it all her life. She had been quite smiling since her arrival at Swanage, and had been out a good deal with the children, and was always ready to enter into their accounts of their various pleasures and discoveries. Indeed there was such a change in her that Dolly had said,

"I believe it was Bounce after all, and not the pillow."

The shops were a great amusement to the children, because they were allowed to go out and

execute small commissions, and it is extremely amusing to have a little business to do, when in a general way you have none at all. And they thought the shops remarkably convenient ones, as you might ask for whatever you liked and would be sure to have it, if it was to be had. "And though it often isn't, grandmamma," Jenny said, "you can always look about and find something that will do instead."

They had lived so completely in the country, never caring to accept the offer of a drive to the town, that grand shops were quite unknown things to them, and they were delighted with those they now so often frequented. You might have seen Bob and Dick at one counter, getting a post-office order and some stamps, and Jenny at the opposite side buying some ribbon for grandmamma, while Dolly was bargaining among some canisters in the middle of the shop for some gingerbread nuts, the very best ones, all the children said, and the best cakes ever tasted were to be bought at Swanage.

"Sea air is a good sauce," General Weisell remarked, and both he and Mrs. Weisell were glad

to see the rosy cheeks and sunburnt faces that looked so different on their arrival.

Jenny's hair was a standing trial to her and to Ann, what with the sand and the salt water; however, orders had come from India that it was not to be cut off, so patience, grandmamma said, was the only cure, and was a very good thing to be brought into daily practice. Jenny's hair was very fair, and her eyes were blue, so were Dick's, and they were supposed, as Mrs. Bounce said, "to favour their papa," while Bob and Dolly were like their mother, and like each other.

One afternoon the children determined to desert their favourite rocky cove and return to the sands, where during the morning they had begun building an immense castle which they wished to finish. They amused themselves with it till they were tired, and then they cast about in their minds what they should do next.

"I wish we hadn't come here," Bob said, "there's more to do in the cove."

"Yes, let's go there," Dolly exclaimed.

"No, no," Jenny answered, "it's much too late."

"It would be time to come back, by the time we got there," Dick said. "I say, look at that boat just on the shore; let 's get into it and have a row."

Now the boat was in a very tempting position. You will probably never see one on Swanage beach in exactly the same again; and it was an accident that it was there. It would take too long for me to tell you its whole history. There it certainly was, all but in the water; and the tide was just at its highest, and helping to set it entirely afloat.

"Let 's be quick in, or it will be gone," Bob cried. "Come along;" and they all four rushed to the spot.

Bob's shoes and stockings were off in an instant, and tossed into the boat. One shoe fell short into the water, but was quickly rescued. Then Dolly was lifted in, and Jenny followed, and the two boys, wading up past their knees, pushed and pushed.

"We shan't do it," Bob said.

"Yes, we shall," Dick answered. "You just go on."

Another good shove, and it moved, and slipped a little. They sprang over the boat's side, and

presently there they were with oars to row and a boat all to themselves on the sea.

"This is the best fun in the world," Dick said; "better a hundred times than the pond. Now, won't we row out!"

There were two oars, and being both very strong boys, they were able to handle them wonderfully well considering. Besides, they had been out several times for a rowing lesson, and they considered themselves very clever indeed in the management of a boat; and they struck out into the bay, and pulled away for a little time without feeling tired. However, the sea was not very smooth, and somehow or other the enjoyment did not appear to last long. They became a silent party, till, as usual, Dolly spoke her mind.

"I wish we had never come," she said. "I would much rather be on the beach. I didn't want to come, only you put me in."

"You would have wanted to come, if we had given you time," Dick replied crossly. "Oh, there 's the oar gone!"

He had been resting, and not attending to what

he was about, and the oar had slipped from his hand. He leant over to try and recover it.

"Don't lean over," Jenny said; "you'll be in." And she pulled him suddenly and sharply back.

"There, now it's gone for ever, because you did that," he exclaimed. "We can't get it now; and how shall we ever get back with one oar?"

"Oh, dear, I wish we had never come!" Jenny cried. "How horrid it is being in a boat, and I feel so sick! Bob, what shall we do?"

"Get back," Bob said rather shortly; "but we've gone much further than I intended. The tide has turned, and we are drifting out all the time, and I can't do much with one oar."

"We must stay *in* the boat," Dolly said, "because I can't swim at all in the water."

Nobody could help smiling at this.

"Indeed, Dolly," Jenny answered, "though I can swim, I am sure I could not get to land; and I don't believe any body could—we've gone so far. What will Ann do? She won't be able to find us when she comes down."

Bob had not said much. He had been feeling

for some time past that their getting into the boat at all was a mistake. He was trying his best with the one oar left; but his arms were aching, and all the boat seemed to do was to go further and further from the shore."

"I hope we shall meet another boat, and that will help us," Dick said, as he took the oar from his brother, saying he was rested.

Jenny was lying down as well as she could, and was feeling too unhappy to say anything. Dolly was sitting very still, looking as if any minute she would begin to cry.

"I am so very frightened," she said.

Bob was trying to comfort her, when Dick exclaimed,

"There, it 's gone!"

"What?" Bob said. "Not the other oar?"

"Yes, it is."

"How could you, Dick?"

"I couldn't help it," Dick replied. "I don't know how it went. It slipped away, and we don't do any good with it, that 's certain."

"You ought to have taken care," Bob said.

"I can't help it," Dick repeated; "it's gone. Some boat or other will find us, and take us back."

Bob had been looking round for such a chance for some time; but a wind had sprung up; it had turned off cold, and no pleasure boats were about. However, after a few minutes they saw a welcome sight—a schooner sailing down close on their track, and from it they had certainly been observed; for a little boat was lowered, and came towards them. A gentleman and a boatman were in it, and were greatly surprised to find the company they met with in this stray boat on the sea.

"We'll take the boat in tow," the gentleman said; "and we'll take you all on board, and into Swanage. We shall be there in half an hour or so."

In reality, the children had only been in the boat about an hour and a half; but it seemed to them much more. During the latter part of the time they had been so unhappy, and a very depressed little party assembled on the schooner. Dolly was lifted on board, and the first question asked her was whether she had lost her tongue. Bob

was asked a great many, and he told their story truthfully, as he always did; but he felt ashamed of it. There was another gentleman in the schooner, and the son of one of them, a boy a little older than Bob and Dick, was very kind to them, and showed them all there was to be seen, and told them of the cruises he had been round the island, and elsewhere along the coast. Bob and Dick listened, and wished they had done as much, and looked on their new acquaintance with great respect. Then they began to remember their own travels from India, and told of them.

"But I 'd rather have a yacht," Dick said, "and go about free where you like, than be in a big vessel."

"I am sure I think a big vessel is much better than anything else, if you must go on the sea," Jenny put in; "but I never wish to go away from the land again."

"Well, we 'll soon put you on the land," one of the gentlemen said. "We are very near it now."

"There," Dolly exclaimed, almost her first words, as the little boat in which they put off from

the schooner neared the pier; "I do believe there's grandpapa and grandmamma waiting for us."

Assuredly they were. Mrs. Weisell's anxiety had been great ever since Ann's return from the beach with the report that she could find the young gentlemen and ladies nowhere.

"But, Ann, you should have looked more thoroughly," her mistress said. "They can only have gone upon the downs, and forgotten the hour."

Ann protested, with tears in her eyes, that she had hunted and called in every direction. Poor Ann always thought of great misfortunes rather than of little ones. She suggested they might have got lost in the sea, and then she thought they might have fallen into pits on the downs in which there would be water, and Mrs. Weisell became thoroughly frightened at such a possible idea. General Weisell was out. What was to be done? Mrs. Weisell could think of nothing; and when he came in, all he said was he hoped they would soon be back. He scouted the idea of pits. There were none to tumble into; nor would he hear of any other great danger as likely to have

befallen them. Still, he was anxious for their return, though he concealed it to reassure Mrs. Weisell. He went out to make enquiries. Meanwhile, the boat had been missed, and glasses from the shore had seen it, and another boat had been sent out to the rescue, when it was observed that the schooner was giving the help required. The boat returned with the news that the children were all safe, and would shortly appear.

Then General Weisell went back to the hotel with the good tidings, and he and Mrs. Weisell repaired to the jetty to receive the runaways.

"This must not happen again," Mrs. Weisell said more than once.

"No, my dear, it shan't," the General answered; "those boys are up to anything."

"Anything they are told not to do, my dear. They are obedient. They want looking after; that is all."

"Well, here they are, safe enough at any rate," the General said. "One, two, three, four," he counted as they came up the steps on to the stone pier.

"My dear children, where have you been?" Mrs. Weisell exclaimed, unable to restrain her delight at seeing them, though she wished to show how really displeased she was.

"Oh, grandmamma," Jenny said, "we are so glad to see you again, we are so tired, and so sorry, and I have been so sick."

"That 's not more than you deserved," the General answered, and then he turned to thank the gentlemen for their kindness, and after a little chat with them he walked back with Bob and Dick to the hotel. Mrs. Weisell had gone on with Jenny and Dolly, and the latter was in bed and asleep when the others returned.

Poor Dolly! If she had shown herself a good sailor in one respect, she was sick enough at heart. Certainly the afternoon had been a sad one to her; she had been thoroughly frightened in the boat, and was, as Mrs. Weisell wisely judged, punished enough. "Give her some bread and butter and milk; do not trouble to plait her hair, but put her to bed," was the kind verdict, and Dolly's hours of sorrow were soon passing away in the sweet slum-

bers of forgetfulness. Jenny soon followed her example, but not before she had told every event of the afternoon, with many protests that they would never behave so again.

"Well, boys," the General said, when Bob and Dick had finished the tea prepared for them, "you have frightened your grandmamma very much this time, and nothing of the sort must happen again."

"No, grandpapa, it shan't," they answered.

"What made you think of such a mad prank? and taking your little sisters too!"

"I don't know," Bob replied; "but when we were off, I knew we oughtn't to have gone."

"We were never told ——." Dick began; but Bob interrupted him. "No, don't," he whispered sharply.

"You are not to go out in a boat alone, that is fixed," the General said; "and don't get into any more scrapes for the rest of the time we are here. You have made your grandmamma and me very anxious. I am sure you are sorry for it, and so you ought. Mind, I shall trust you that this shall

not happen again. I could have you looked after, but I don't think anything of people who have to be looked after, and can't be trusted; mind that, I don't think anything of them. Now, go and wish your grandmamma good night, and off with you."

The General had never made a longer lecture in his life; but this one was better remembered than most lectures are. I think in years to come it will be thought of sometimes by those to whom it was addressed.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHY WE ARE LEFT BEHIND.

THE last week the children were at Swanage they found a new amusement, riding on donkeys. There were such good ones to be hired. Bob and Dick had learned to ride, and two ponies were a present promised by General Weisell at Christmas, and they were to be ridden by all in turns. However, when there were no ponies to be had, they none of them despised donkeys, and very wisely; for what can be more unwise than not to take and enjoy what you can get, because you cannot have what you would like most? Dolly quite distinguished herself in these rides. No one sat more firmly on their donkey than she did, or

trotted along so gaily. Somehow her donkey always went better than anybody else's, and required less beating.

"It 's because I pat him, and tell him he is a dear," Dolly said, "and because I don't wish him to be a pony."

Jenny had wished for a wand to turn them all into ponies at starting.

"You see, Dolly," Bob said, "you've got something for being small at last. You're light to be carried."

"Just a fly on his back," Dick remarked.

"Indeed," Dolly answered, "Grandmamma says my frocks are all grown too little. There now!"

"Then your frocks are grown, not you," Dick retorted.

But Dolly had trotted away quite satisfied.

You must not think the adventure in the boat was forgotten at once. No, it was remembered by all, and talked of, and often alluded to. Mrs. Weisell had looked grave on the subject for many days, but she had ceased to think much about it now, and had even promised to go out with her

grandchildren for a row, on the last evening they spent at Swanage, if it was fine. They wished it so very much. I am not sure that Mrs. Weisell did, and therefore she put it off to the last evening, with the conditions of no wind and a smooth sea, ones that she hardly thought would be fulfilled. However, they were. The weather left nothing to be desired, and General and Mrs. Weisell and their grandchildren spent a most pleasant two hours, rowing to Parson's Barn, and taking a very near view of "Old Harry," a well-known rock which stands out white and straight in the sea, detached from the cliff. Dolly had always refused to go in a boat since the unhappy afternoon she had spent in one, but this time she liked it as much as anybody. You may have been surprised that Jenny cared to go after her late experience, but Jenny was no coward. Bob and Dick liked a boat, why should not she? She hoped never to feel again as she had on the past occasion, and she proved herself an excellent sailor on this one.

Last days will come. The children were very sorry to say good-bye to the cove, and the shore, and

the shops, where they had made so many friends; but, after all, home is home; and when they thought of the dogs, and the rabbits, and the pond, and in fact of everybody, not even Mrs. Bounce excepted, then the going home seemed perfectly delightful. The drive was much the same as coming.

"A very good thing over for the people who must go inside the carriage," Jenny said; "the train is much better."

"Yes," Dolly answered; "so much more to see, and we are going to wait at one place, aren't we, grandmamma; and we may get out and walk about?"

"Yes, my dears, you may with Ann," Mrs. Weisell replied. "I shall remain in the carriage; I prefer doing so."

"I wonder you do, grandma'," Dolly said; "it does make me so tired to sit still."

"Ah, my dear, grandmamma is an old lady!"

"You don't seem at all old to me," Dolly said; then correcting herself, "I mean, only just old enough."

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Great was the satisfaction when they came to the station at which all might get out and walk about.

"We shall see a new place," Bob said, "and that's something;" and he and Dick rushed off together to look about them and buy some buns. Jenny and Dolly were only to walk up and down with Ann, "not out of sight," Mrs. Weisell gave her orders. It was certainly better than staying in the carriage, but it was nothing to the freedom that Bob and Dick were enjoying.

"That's the bother of being a girl," Jenny said; "you mayn't do what you like."

"You may when you are grown up," Dolly replied; "but not when you are little. Let us go and look at those pictures, Jenny. Grandma' can see us from there."

By-and-by General Weisell came up to them.

"Now, my dears," he said, "time to get in again. The bell has rung. Where are your brothers?"

"They went away together," Jenny answered.

"Well, we shall be off without them, if they don't come."

"Where are the boys?" Mrs. Weisell said, putting her head out at the carriage window.

"They 'll be back in a minute," the General said, "or they 'll be left behind," he added.

Mrs. Weisell stepped out on the platform in all haste.

"My dear, they must be found. We can't go on without them. It is impossible."

"Train off," the guard said, passing sharply by. "Take your places."

"Get in, my dear," the General said; "they must follow by the next train. If they are late, it 's their own fault. They ought to have been in the way."

And Mrs. Weisell found herself somehow in the carriage, the General opposite her, the door shut, and the train off.

"Oh, grandma'!" Jenny and Dolly exclaimed in one breath; "why, they are left quite behind."

"To be sure they are," the General replied, "and grandmamma was nearly left behind too. Now, what would you have done then?"

"I should have jumped out," Dolly said.

"But, my dear," Mrs. Weisell remonstrated, "what is to be done?"

"They must come on by the next train. It serves them right."

"Oh, but what will they do meanwhile? It makes me so anxious."

"They 'll be all right," the General said; "naught is never in danger."

"What is naught?" Dolly asked her sister.

"Nothing—nobody," Jenny answered.

"Then Bob isn't nothing or nobody," Dolly said indignantly, "and Dick isn't. Oh, grandma', do let's go back for them."

"Why, Dolly," Jenny replied, "the train couldn't stop, even if grandpapa wished it to stop."

"Oh! Then it can only stand still at the places?"

"It couldn't be stopped, I know," Jenny said; "but I am so sorry they are left behind. I wish we knew what they are doing. I wonder what they will think has become of the train?"

"They 'll just see it running away," Dolly said sadly, "and they won't be able to catch it."

"No, that they won't," the General observed,

laughing. He had been quieting Mrs. Weisell's anxiety, while the children had been talking together. "That they won't," he repeated, lifting little Dolly on his knee. "They are sad, naughty boys, are they not?"

"No, grandpapa, 'cos they didn't mean to be," Dolly answered earnestly.

"How will they get back?" Jenny said.

"I shall telegraph from the next station, and they 'll be home by bedtime."

You can imagine that for the rest of the journey Jenny and Dolly could think of nothing but Bob and Dick. They never ceased to wonder what they were doing, and what they would say when they found they were left behind. They whispered together on these subjects so quietly at one end of the carriage, that Mrs. Weisell could not help remarking that two to travel with was very different from four, and the General added that it was an ill wind that blew nobody any good.

It was a lovely, cool evening, and the drive to Cranberry Hall was very pleasant.

"Such a pity Bob and Dick are not with us,"

Dolly said. "We shan't be able to do what we meant to, Jenny."

"No; we must wait till to-morrow. It would be no fun without the boys. I hope we shall stay up till they come back."

"I am afraid I shall not be able to allow that," Mrs. Weisell said. "I do not think your brothers can return till very late."

The trees in the park were looking so pretty, and the flowers near the house so bright, and there was Mrs. Bounce standing at the hall door to receive them.

"Where are the young gentlemen?" was one of her first enquiries.

Mrs. Weisell explained what had happened in many words.

"Indeed, ma'am, I'm not suprised" (Jenny and Dolly heard Mrs. Bounce answer); "glad you have returned so far safe, ma'am."

"She would never be surprised at any of our sad fortune," Dolly said to Jenny.

"No," Jenny replied; "she said just what I knew she would say."

Bob and Dick were most certainly surprised when they found the train had gone without them. They had not thought of such a thing as even possible to happen. When they had left the carriage, they had rushed off to the book-stall to look at something that had caught their eye and fancy from the carriage window. Then they went through the station, out into the street on the other side, and a few steps down it to look at a shop; and a little further on they saw something they instantly rushed towards—something entirely new to their eyes, and which made them forget time, and all that was expected of them. It was an exhibition of "Punch and Judy." There was but a small crowd, and they had a full view, and were certainly the most eager of all the spectators; for probably there were none others who had not often seen the sight before. To Bob and Dick it was enchanting and amusing, more than words can say. They laughed till they did not know what to do. Then towards the end there were moments of deep interest and some horror; but every one gazed only the more, and grown-up, well-dressed passers-by

stopped just for a minute to look. Bob and Dick thought the dog Toby, on this special occasion, a cleverer little creature than they had imagined possible.

"If we could only teach a little dog to do those tricks!" Dick exclaimed.

"What a pity Jenny and Dolly are not here!" Bob said. "What would they say to it?"

"How stupid they couldn't come!" Dick rejoined.

At that moment, if they had been wise enough to know it, Jenny and Dolly were being carried further and further away by the train, which had started some minutes. Bob and Dick never noticed any warning sound in the distance. They were far too intent on the sight they were beholding. When the ragged boy came round with his hat, they dropped in all the stray pence they had in their pockets, and then they watched the whole apparatus of Punch's house packed up, and shouldered by the man whose property it was; and as he walked off in hopes of finding other gazers, they returned to the station to find no train waiting for them.

"Where are you for, young gentlemen?" a porter said, coming up to them, after seeing them looking in all directions with wonder at the vacancy before them.

"We want to go by the train to Bondley," Bob replied.

"It 's gone twenty minutes ago."

"But we were travelling in it," Dick said.

"Then you 're left behind, sir."

"What are we to do then?" Bob asked.

"You can go on by the next. I 'll speak to the guard."

"I say, what a way grandmamma will be in!" Bob said. "We ought not to have waited. I thought there was lots of time."

"So did I," Dick answered. "We weren't many minutes."

"We were longer than we thought, I fancy," Bob replied. "I wonder when we can go on."

They went to enquire all particulars, and found there would be no train till late in the evening. They had spent all their money; so it was no use being hungry, and they had, as they would

have expressed it, "to poke about doing nothing," and a very slow occupation they found it. They were so afraid now of being left behind, that they would not go out of sight of the place where the train would come up; so they sauntered up and down, and read the advertisements, and were tired enough of them before the time came for starting. The journey raised their spirits; for the guard, at their great wish, took them into his van, and this, with him to talk to, they found better than any first-class carriage. A fly awaited them at the station, and it was after ten when they reached Cranberry Hall. Like the culprits they were, they went at once to the library, expecting to find General and Mrs. Weisell sitting there on this first evening. And so they were, Mrs. Weisell taking a little rest in her arm-chair, and the General reading the paper. He laid it down, and pushed his spectacles up on his forehead.

"Well, young men," he said, "and here you are; and what have you got to say for yourselves?"

"Oh, my dears, how careless of you!" Mrs. Weisell said. "I am glad to see you safe back."

"Not much danger," the General observed; "but come, we are not hearing a great deal of what you have been doing."

Truth to tell, Bob and Dick felt ashamed of themselves, and they looked so.

"We stayed to see 'Punch and Judy,'" Bob said suddenly, as if he wished to get over the confession.

"We didn't think we had been so long," Dick observed.

"No; we forgot all about the time," his brother said.

"'Punch and Judy!'" (how the General laughed). "Have you never seen 'Punch and Judy' before?"

"No," Bob answered boldly; "we have often heard of it, and wished to see it, and we liked it awfully."

"Well, go and tell Mrs. Bounce what you have been about, and see if she will forgive you; but trains won't wait for 'Punch and Judy;' mind that for the future. Trains don't wait for anybody but the Queen."

"Tea is ready for you, and you must be hungry," Mrs. Weisell said. "Go to Ann at once."

"Hungry! Not they," the General exclaimed.

"Oh, but aren't we though?" Dick said. "Why, grandpapa, we have had nothing. We paid all our money to 'Punch and Judy.'"

The General laughed more than ever at hearing this.

"Well," he said, "I'm glad you'll have something to make you remember 'Punch and Judy.'"

"You might have made a little more of the occasion, General," Mrs. Weisell said reprovingly, when the boys had left the room. "When you laugh so heartily, I do not like to say anything."

"It was such a good excuse, my dear. Why, they had never seen it, and I turn my head now to have a look at 'Punch.' Don't I remember the first time I saw it as a boy! How they must have enjoyed the sight! To be sure, how they must!"

CHAPTER IX.

"SWEET TOBY!"

JENNY and Dolly had gone to bed, but with Mrs. Weisell's express permission to stay awake till their brothers return. They had begged to be allowed to do so. When she said to them, "Go to bed, my dears, and to sleep as fast as possible," Dolly answered, "Oh, grandma', we mean to stay awake, do let us!"

"We want to see them so much," Jenny said, "we want to try to stay awake."

"And don't say we must shut our eyes, grandma', please don't," Dolly pleaded; "cos' I can't stay awake if I do."

"Well then, dears, you may do as you wish this once," Mrs. Weisell replied, "though I do not think

it is good for you;" and when she went to see that Bob and Dick were having their tea comfortably, she said, "Have you seen your sisters, and are they awake? They are very anxious to see you."

"We've not been upstairs yet," Dick answered.

"But we'll go in a minute," Bob said.

"Then creep up quietly, because they might be asleep. They were going to try to keep awake, they were so concerned at your being left behind in this sad way."

After Jenny and Dolly were in bed, they had talked together for a little time in whispers, and then there came a pause between the talking, and presently Jenny asked a question, and received no answer.

"Why, Dolly, you are asleep," she said.

"No, Jenny," Dolly replied, starting up. "You didn't say anything, did you? I won't go to sleep, but my eyes won't stay open."

"Try to look at something," Jenny advised; "that's what I am doing. It's rather dark, but it won't be quite dark yet."

Dolly fixed her eyes at once on a black spot on

the wall, to which she turned her face. She gazed at it till she seemed to see many spots, then no spots at all; and then she rubbed her eyes, and saw only the one black spot that really was there, and then the same thing happened again in the most puzzling way. "I can't do it, Jenny," she exclaimed with a sigh; "I must stay awake with my eyes shut."

"Then never mind, Dolly dear," Jenny said, "Go to sleep; it doesn't matter if you do. We shall see the boys to-morrow."

And very soon after, rising up to listen, Jenny heard by Dolly's soft, regular breathing that she had followed her advice; and when Bob and Dick opened the door gently, and said "good night," Jenny was the only one to reply.

"I 'm awake," she said, "but I believe I 've been asleep. How are you? What have you been doing? Are you all right?"

"Yes, all right," Bob answered.

"And not had bad fun," Dick added.

"And grandpapa never said a word," Bob went on; "but we are not to talk to-night, grandmamma

said. Stop, don't shut the door Dick, I am going to kiss Doll."

"Then do it gently, not to wake her," Jenny said. "She was very tired, she could not stay awake."

"Mind, we 'll be up early to-morrow," Dick put his head in to say as the door was closing, and a quarter to eight found them all assembled on the lawn. "Not so early, after all," Bob said.

"Now for it. Where shall we go?" Dick exclaimed.

"Half an hour to breakfast-time."

"Too late for the shrubberies," Bob answered decidedly. "Let 's go and let out Carlo and Dash, and see what they 'll say to us."

They ran off to the stable yard, and the dogs gave them, to their great joy, more of a welcome than they had yet received.

"They love us," Dolly cried, "don't they?" as Dash and Carlo rushed round them, wagging their tails, and making little howls of pleasure.

"We mustn't take them round to the front of the house," Jenny said. "Tie them up again now. Dolly and I are going to see the rabbits."

The rabbits looked as usual, and did not make any sign of recognition, greatly to Dolly's disappointment. "They don't care much for us," she said.

"They care for cabbage leaves though," Dick remarked, pushing some leaves between the bars of their hutch.

"Let's come down into the park now, and look where we cut our names on the tree," Bob said.

"You have actually never told us what you did yesterday," Jenny observed, as they went towards the spot named.

Then Bob began a recital of what they had seen, and Dick put in words to describe the wonderful acting of "Punch and Judy;" and really he managed very well in imitating Punch's voice and dog Toby's acts. Jenny and Dolly listened breathlessly. "How I wish I had seen it all," Jenny cried. "I do so hope we may go to London some day, as grandpapa says we shall. Then we should see 'Punch and Judy.'"

"You can see it in other places besides London," Dick said.

"Yes, but you are sure to see it there," Jenny replied; "and it is just a chance in other places."

"How do you know you can see it in London?"

"Oh, grandpapa said we could see anything in London, all sorts of sights! but I only care to see 'Punch and Judy' and the waxworks, you know, Dolly. Grandmamma was telling us all about them the other night."

"Yes, and I want to go to London," Dolly exclaimed, "just to see 'Punch and Judy,' and the waxworks, and the Queen."

"You can see the Queen at the waxworks," Jenny said.

"Yes, but I want to see the Queen really alive," Dolly rejoined. "And, Bob, did you *really* see the baby thrown out of window?"

"Yes, Dolly, I did."

"What! right on the ground?"

"Yes."

"Then it was a very wicked thing to see!"

"You'd have looked, Dolly, all the same," Dick said.

"Yes, I should," Dolly answered reflectively, "but I should have been very sorry."

That afternoon the children went to pay Miss Straight a visit. There was still a week's holiday in prospect. "But a week will soon pass," Bob observed. "However, I don't mind when we've begun school, it is just the beginning that is so stupid."

"It would be very stupid if Miss Straight wasn't so kind," Jenny answered. "How lovely the wood is; better than Swanage after all."

Miss Straight was delighted to receive them.

"Come in, come in everybody," she said; "I was quite expecting you this afternoon, and we must have five o'clock tea together. You see every thing is on the table but the teapot, and that is in the kitchen waiting for the visitors to come."

Miss Straight's room was such a pretty one, I must describe it a little. There was a bow-window, and from it a lovely view over the wood; for the little cottage was built on a rising piece of ground. There was no smart furniture in it, but there were very pretty pictures on the walls, and lovely china

for some time past that their getting into the boat at all was a mistake. He was trying his best with the one oar left; but his arms were aching, and all the boat seemed to do was to go further and further from the shore."

"I hope we shall meet another boat, and that will help us," Dick said, as he took the oar from his brother, saying he was rested.

Jenny was lying down as well as she could, and was feeling too unhappy to say anything. Dolly was sitting very still, looking as if any minute she would begin to cry.

"I am so very frightened," she said.

Bob was trying to comfort her, when Dick exclaimed,

"There, it's gone!"

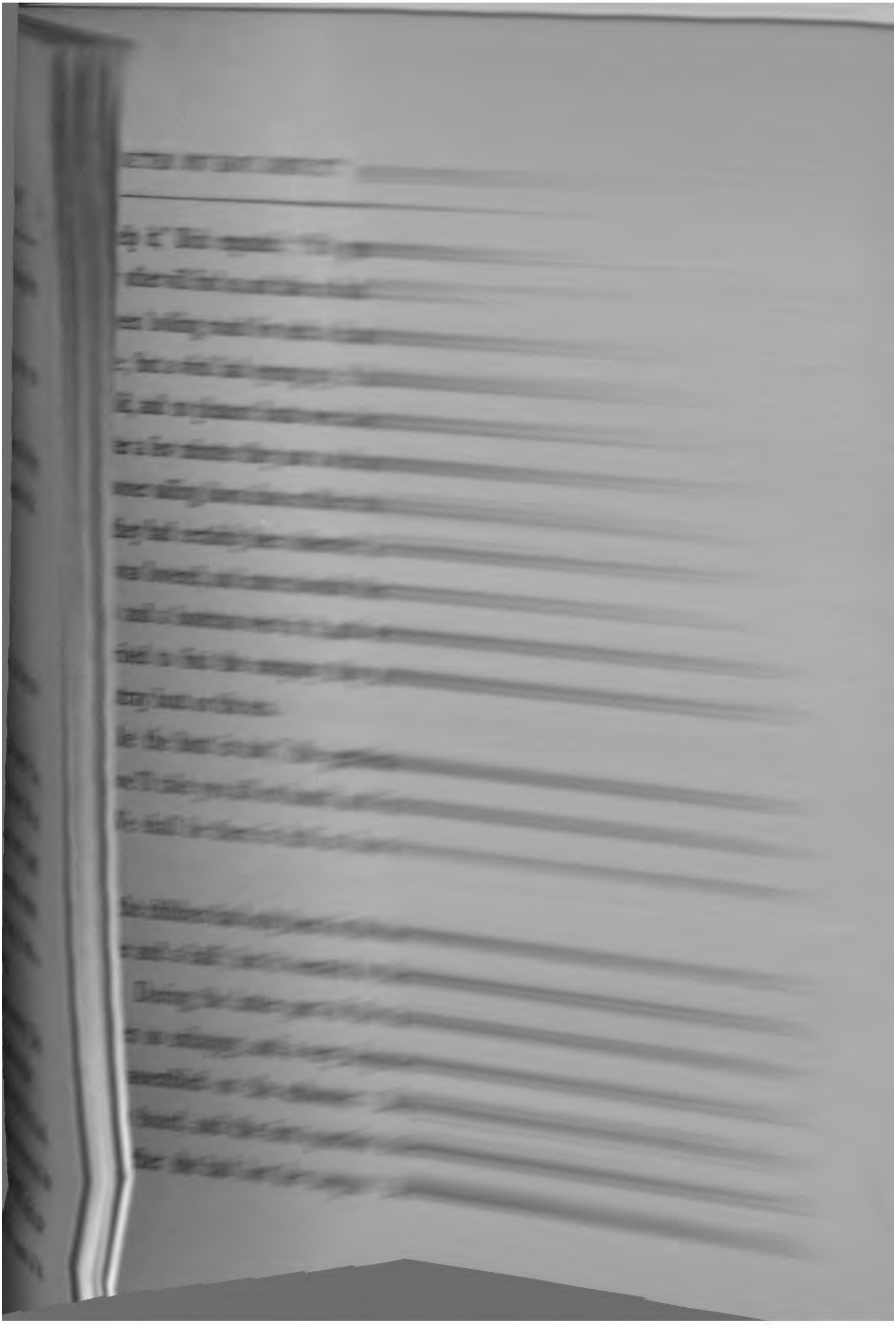
"What?" Bob said. "Not the other oar?"

"Yes, it is."

"How could you, Dick?"

"I couldn't help it," Dick replied. "I don't know how it went. It slipped away, and we don't do any good with it, that's certain."

"You ought to have taken care," Bob said.



cups and saucers on little brackets, and there was a large cabinet in which Miss Straight kept what she called her curiosities. The children had never seen them, but they were promised they should do so to-day, and a very pleasant afternoon they spent looking them over.

"I shall be very glad to see you all come again at nine o'clock," Miss Straight said when they were preparing to go.

"Yes," Dolly answered, "but we like the holidays so much, Miss Straight."

"So do I," Miss Straight replied; "but you know, Dolly, all play and no work would never do."

"No, we know it," Jenny said, "grandmamma often tells us that; but I wish it had never been invented that people must do lessons."

"Oh, I don't!" Dick exclaimed.

"No, because you like them," Bob answered.

"You will all like them in time," Miss Straight said consolingly. "Now, I promise you, you will be glad some day that you were not idle when you were young. Good-bye, and a pleasant walk home."

There was plenty of time, and so they loitered by the way, and ran races, and hid from each other behind trees; and presently it was Dolly's turn to hide, and because she thought she was very easy to find, she ran down a little path, and far away by herself, and as she was scrambling in behind a blackberry bush, what did she hear close by but a little scratching, whining noise.

"Oh, dear, what can that be?" she said aloud, "I must go and look."

She hunted about everywhere, and listened; but she could hear nothing but Dick's voice in the distance, shouting, "Are you ready?"

"No," she called, and at that moment the whining sound came again. She darted this time to the right spot, and there what do you think she saw? a tiny black and white puppy! There was a little stream of water near, and it seemed as if some one had thrown it in with the intention of drowning it, and it was struggling for its life in the weeds, but the mud was pulling it back, and it certainly would have been drowned but for Dolly's timely assistance. She pulled it gently from its

painful position, and sat down with it in her arms.

"Oh, you poor thing!" she said, "I 'll take care of you."

The mud with which it was covered was wiped off on her frock. "Never mind," she said, "he can't help that. Come, come!" she called to the others.

"Why, she 's not hid a bit," she could hear Dick say. "Did you ever, after all this time."

"Come and see; just see," Dolly called.

"Why, what is it?" Bob said. "A puppy, I declare! We 'll take it home, Doll, and keep it. Where did you find it?"

Dolly explained. "I know I wish I had found it," Dick said.

"It must be Dolly's," Bob replied.

"If grandpapa will let us keep it," Jenny said.

"Oh, I am sure he will!" Dolly answered warmly. "He wouldn't be so cruel as to drown it."

"No, he wouldn't do that," Jenny answered, "but he might not wish us to keep it."

"But let us take it home and ask him."

"Come along then," Bob said; "but put it down just to see how it can walk."

The little puppy was very young, and his legs sprawled out under him, and seemed to be of very little use for the present. Besides, he would go snuffling into the ditch by the side of the road, instead of keeping in the straight path, as he was wished to do.

"We must carry him," Bob said; and he took him up.

"Let me take him indoors," Dolly begged.

"Yes, you shall; he's your find."

But every one in turn enjoyed the pleasure of carrying him, and all the way along they admired him. His eyes were so bright and so big, Jenny observed; she had never seen such large eyes.

"Isn't he a sweet?" Dolly cried; "he is worth anything!"

"Worth threepence, isn't he, Dolly?" Bob rejoined.

"What shall we call him?" Dick said.

"What do you wish him called, Dolly?" Bob asked. "You know he's yours."

"He is mine, and he shall be everybody's," Dolly answered. "What name do you think, Bob?"

"Oh, I think Toby! and he is rather like the Toby we saw."

"Oh, then he shall be Toby!" Dolly exclaimed, delighted at the idea; "and now I 'll take him in."

They were close to the house. Dolly took him carefully in her arms, and ran. The hall door stood open; but as she came in, Toby slipped a little from her grasp. No time to stop. On to the drawing-room she went, laid him for an instant on the mat, threw the door open, and caught him up; she was in such a hurry to be first with her story and her prize. She rushed forward to Mrs. Weisell, who was sitting in her usual chair, occupied with her work. In her great haste, she tripped her foot over the rug, and down she came, the puppy going straight into grandmamma's lap, as Dolly fell at her feet.

"My dear, what have you brought in?" Mrs. Weisell exclaimed. "Take it away, my dear. Look at my poor work!"

Toby was indeed making a scramble amongst

the wools and silks. In an instant Dolly was up, and had taken him into her arms.

"Oh, grandma'," she said, "I didn't mean to do that! You poor, poor little thing, I hope you are not hurt."

"But you do not think of my poor wools," Mrs. Weisell said; "look at them."

"Oh! grandma', I 'm so sorry."

Bob and Dick and Jenny had all appeared by this time.

"Isn't it a love, grandmamma?" they began. "Dolly found it. May we keep it? Do let us."

"My dears, you quite frighten me. Come in more gently. Why, little girls should be as gentle as a zephyr."

No time to ask then what a zephyr might be; but Dolly looked up with wide-open eyes of enquiry, as she always did when something was said she did not understand. After shutting the door, as they were begged to do, they proceeded to tell how they had found poor Toby; and Mrs. Weisell, finding how much their hearts were set upon keeping him, said they might do so, provided their

grandpapa had no objection. When they heard this, they felt their cause was gained.

"But he is a dirty little fellow," Mrs. Weisell said; "he has been in the mud. I don't like him in my lap, Dolly, and he must never come into the house, mind that. Grandpapa will scold if he does."

General Weisell was waited and watched for, and before he came indoors his consent was won. Then a bed was found for Toby in the stable, and he was given plenty of warm milk to drink. He had already had some. And he was taken round in triumph, and shown to everybody, and made so much of, that it would have been a wonder indeed if he had not looked happy, and tried as hard as he did to wag his little stumpy tail.

Little else was talked of but Toby that evening; but Dolly stopped in the middle of describing how she had made him drink the milk, and said:

"What 's a zepper, grandmamma?"

"A zephyr, Dolly!" Mrs. Weisell answered. "It is a gentle, soft wind, that comes and goes without a sound."

"Oh, I couldn't be like that!" and Dolly smiled at the idea; "not if I tried, I couldn't, grandma'. Could I?"

"You could be gentle," Mrs. Weisell said, "and I like little girls to be so."

"Then I will try, grandma'; but I was in such a hurry to show you Toby."

In a few weeks' time Toby was the pet of the house; he grew such a good, trustworthy little dog. He was very fond of all his four friends, but most fond of Dolly, who, having fewer lessons to do than the others, made even more of a companion of him than they did; talking to him when she was alone with him, and telling him all the stories she could think of. And when, after lying quiet and listening, as Dolly was quite sure he did, he would suddenly snap his eyes, and give her hand a sharp little whisking lick, she felt quite certain that was his way of saying, "Thank you, missis; I love you." He always accompanied the children on their walks to school. As you know, they each carried a bag for their books, though Dolly had none of her own. She had been given a bag, and Bob always gave

her a book to put in it, because it pleased her so much to do the same as the others did. Now she left her bag at home, that she might be freer to play with Toby; and when Miss Straight sent her out for a change, as she often did, because the hours of lessons were too long for her, that was the time that Dolly sat in the pleasantest little spot she could find, and told Toby stories.

She repeated often to him how glad she was she had found him, and saved him from being drowned, "because," she said one day, "I 've been in the sea, once, Toby, and I know what it 's like to be nearly drowned. Oh, it 's so horrid! but I like you to go into the little streams, Toby, and wash yourself. Yes, you must do that; indeed you must." Toby looked up and snapped his eyes. That was exactly what he did not like doing.

CHAPTER X.

"MERRY IT IS IN THE GOOD GREENWOOD."

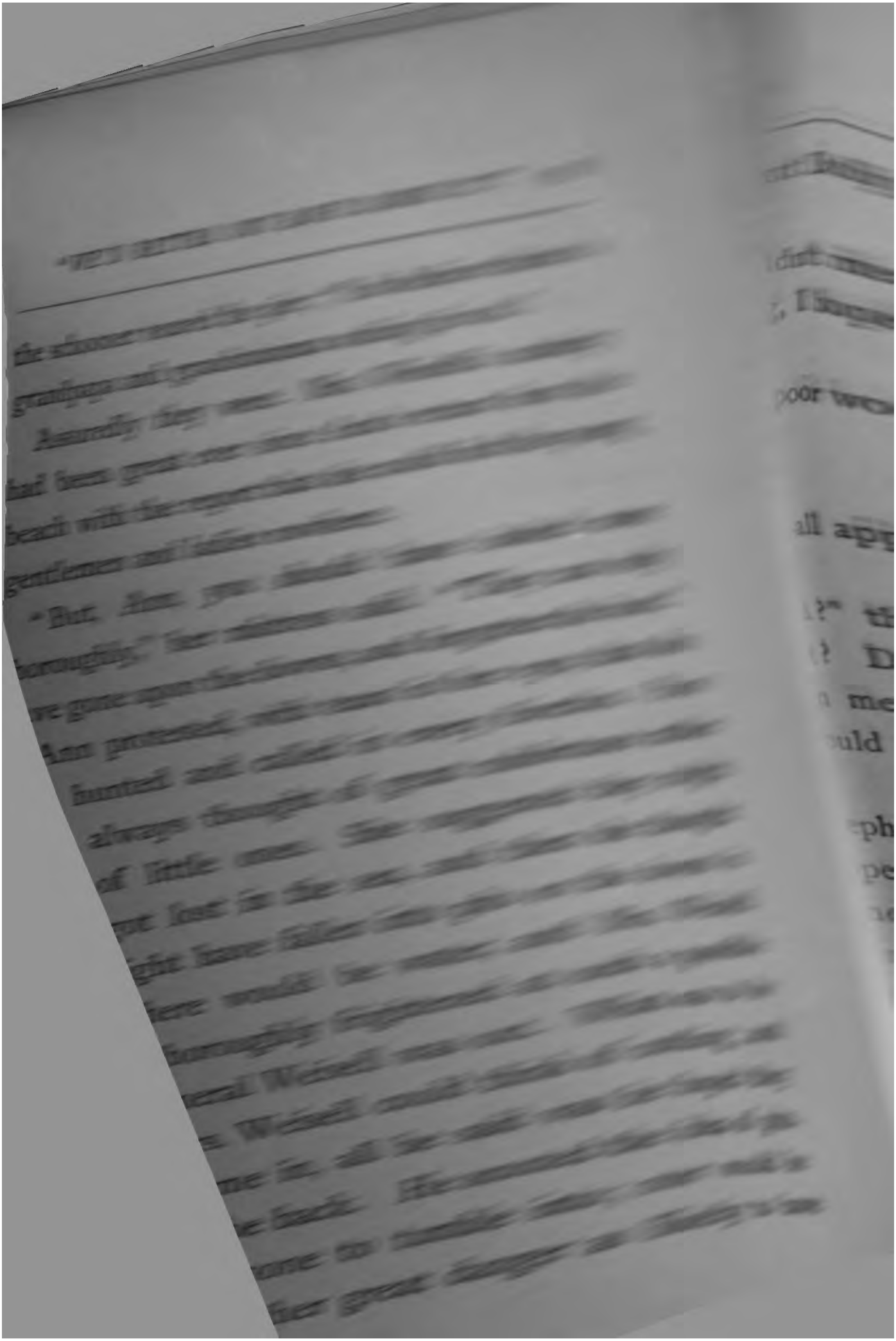
BOB'S birthday was in the autumn. The 12th of October was the day, and it was looked forward to as an event of great interest, as every birthday was in its turn. The children had not much pocket-money; and so little occasion to spend it, they never thought of wishing to have more. It was sufficient saved up to make a nice little sum for birthdays, and a part of it was regularly taken care of for this purpose by Bob or Dick. It was their custom that what the present was should always be a secret till the morning of the day to the one to whom it was given; and yet they made it a great object that the present

was asked a great many, and
truthfully, as he always did; b
of it. There was another gentlem
and the son of one of them, a
than Bob and Dick, was very
showed them all there was to be
of the cruises he had been ro
elsewhere along the coast. Bob
and wished they had done as m
their new acquaintance with gr
they began to remember thei
India, and told of them.

"But I'd rather have a yac
go about free where you like
vessel."

"I am sure I think a big v
than anything else, if you m
Jenny put in; "but I never w
the land again."

"Well, we'll soon put you
the gentlemen said. "We are
"There," Dolly exclaime
words, as the little boat in wh



should be exactly what was most wished for. This year, Dick and Jenny and Dolly could not quite make up their minds what would give Bob the most pleasure.

"Grandpapa and grandmamma have given us so many things," Jenny said to her sister, "that we really don't want anything."

"But we must get something," Dolly answered. "If we could see the shops, we could see things to want. I believe everybody does, that looks into the shops."

"Yes, I suppose we should," Jenny replied; "the next time grandmamma offers us to go into the town, we must go."

"We can't all go, Jenny, 'cos then Bob would know."

"No; it is so difficult. Let 's call Dick, and ask him."

They were in their room, putting on their boots before going out. Dolly jumped up from the floor, and ran to the door.

"Dick," she cried, "Jenny and I want to speak to you particulary."

"Oh, Dolly, you shouldn't have said particularly. Now Bob will know."

"I 'm so sorry," Dolly answered; "but that couldn't tell him, and Bob never suspecs."

"Oh, Dolly," Jenny answered, laughing, "what funny words you do say!"

"Grandpapa and grandmamma says them," Dolly replied.

Dick looked in at this moment.

"What 's the row, Jenny?" he said.

"Come in. We are talking about Bob's present. Is he out of the way for a minute?"

"Yes; he is doing up the fishing-rods."

"Then come and help us," Jenny said. "What *shall* we give him on his birthday?"

"A book, I think," Dick said decidedly. "We saw one on the stall that day we were travelling. I know he 'd like it."

"No, not a book; that 's so stupid," Dolly objected.

"Well, I can't think of anything else," Dick answered; "and I 've thought and puzzled ever so many times."

"We might see something quite new in the town," Jenny suggested. "We 'll go in next time."

"Yes, you and I must go, Jenny," Dick answered.

"But Dolly will wish to come too," Jenny replied.

"Oh, no," Dolly said, "I don't mind; but you must get something very good—something quite worth threepence, mind."

"It is no use Dolly's coming," Dick replied, rather emphatically. "She never knows what to choose, or what things are worth."

"That 's because I 've not learnt money yet," Dolly rejoined. "Miss Straight hasn't taught me, and I don't want to learn it till I must."

"You are quite wise there, Dolly," Jenny said. "Sums are the most vexing things in the world, and my money ones never come right. I suppose Dick and I had better go this time."

"I am sure that will be best," Dick observed, "and grandmamma never asks more than two to come. She says that 's enough."

"Why, we never care to go," Jenny answered; "but she will be sure to take us, if we tell her what we want."

"Yes; all right; that's settled," Dick said. "Now come along. It's a lovely afternoon for fish. We are going to the stream."

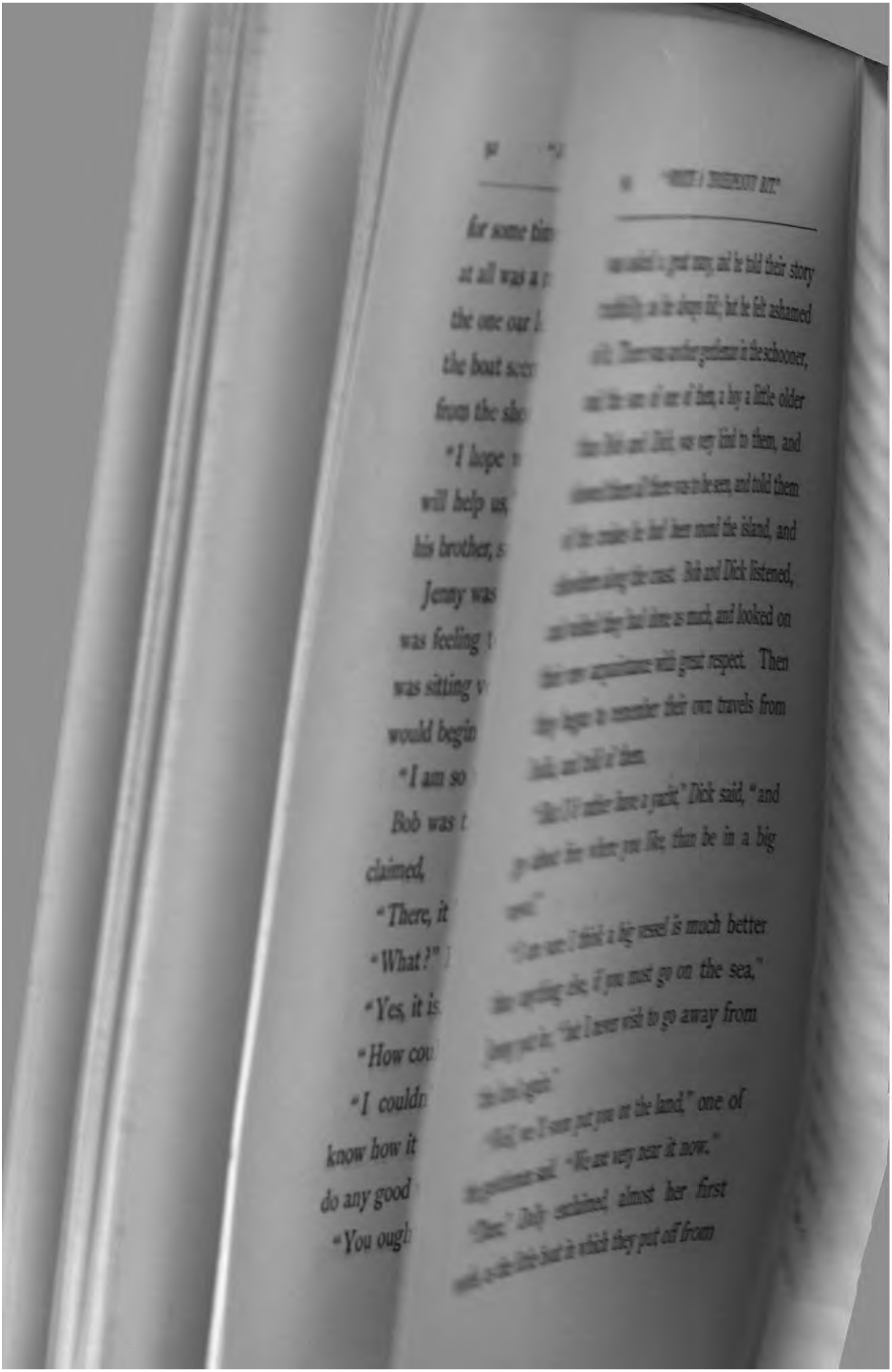
A very few days after that, Mrs. Weisell announced that she was going to drive into the town, and that two might come, if they wished to do so. This was an invitation that was often given; and if Mrs. Weisell had not been in the secret, she would have been very much surprised at its being so readily accepted. As it was, it seemed to fall out quite naturally that Dick, in his Sunday suit, and Jenny, with her best hat on, were ready waiting in the hall when the carriage came round; and Bob and Dolly were arranging their plans for the afternoon elsewhere.

"Where shall we go, Doll?" Bob said.

"Into the wood, please. Let's go and get some nuts again, and some chestnuts, and Toby will come too."

"Come along then," Bob replied. "Shall I take my rod, I'm thinking?"

Oh, no, not to-day, Bob!" It *is* so tiresome to keep still because of the fishes."



"Well, Dolly, then, as I have got you to-day, and nobody else, I suppose I must do as you wish this once. Let 's be off, and bring a basket. We 'll just surprise the others with the precious lot we 'll get."

Away they went, Toby running after them, sniffing about with his little black nose, and rushing up with all speed whenever he was called; for Toby had been taught by his mistress to be very obedient. Certainly the nuts that afternoon were ripe and ruddy-brown. They hung in clusters deep in the wood, where Bob and Dolly pushed their way through brambles and underwood to reach them. A richer-looking tree in the distance, and a better one still beyond it, led them further and further.

"I don't believe we have ever been as far as this before," Bob exclaimed at last. "What a harvest we 've had!"

"But I 'm tired," Dolly said. "Are you, Bob?"

"No, not I. I say, if there aren't two donkeys! They must have strayed in from the common."

"Why, they must be come for us to ride," Dolly said.

"I say, so we will have a ride," Bob answered, "if we can only get near them. You shall have the one with the pack on his back."

"But it isn't a real saddle, Bob."

"Never mind; it will be comfortable enough. So, so! quiet old fellow," and Bob approached the donkey, who did not seem the least disinclined to make friends. "Come on, Dolly," he said, "they are quiet enough. I'll hoist you on;" and in another minute Dolly was on the donkey's back, and, strange to say, it lifted its head, ceased to munch the thistles and grass, and at a quick walk turned along the path.

"I say, stop for me, Dolly," Bob cried.

"I can't," she answered, looking back; "I've got no bridle or whip, and he goes like a sweet."

"All right, I shall be after you," Bob exclaimed.

But his donkey was not willing to go, or desirous of being mounted. Bob, however, contrived to get on his back, but after a few paces he stopped, and showed an inclination to kick.

"Be quiet," Bob said; "get on, get on."

But his words were useless, and by this time

Dolly was almost out of sight. Her donkey quickened its pace. Oh, dear, she said to herself, I must put my leg over for there is no real saddle, and I shall slip off if I don't when he trots. So she was quite occupied with the difficulty of keeping her balance, and had no leisure to look back again, and see if Bob was following her. Had he been wise he would have dismounted, and rushed after Dolly on his legs; but no, he was angry at the donkey's obstinacy. He sprang off, and seized as large a stick as he could see. Again he mounted, and finding the donkey still disposed to pay no attention to him, he gave way to his vexed feelings. "You shall go," he cried, "you shall," and he beat him. The donkey moved a few paces, then he stopped suddenly, put his head down, and gave a furious kick; and Bob remembered nothing more that happened after that, till he seemed at length to awake from a long dream, to find himself lying in the path.

Where was he? What had happened? He got up; he rubbed his eyes, and shook himself as if to make sure he *was* himself. His face was bleed-

ing, his hands scratched, he felt bruised all over. Nothing was to be seen or heard but the sounds of the birds, in many different notes, and the hum of insects. Slowly he recalled the events of the afternoon. They seemed long past. Dolly, left under his charge, where was she? Where were the donkeys? Where was Toby? They were gone, but Dolly could not be lost, she must be hiding from him. He hastened as fast as he could down the path, shouting, "Dolly, Dolly, where are you? Tell me. Speak to me."

There was not even an echo to reply; still he went on further and further from home, calling as he went. Suddenly a thought struck him. "She must have gone home," he said, half aloud, and then with a feeling of relief he thought, "Oh, yes, she must have seen I was hurt, and gone home to tell. Poor Dolly, how frightened she must have been; but if she is only safe! Why did I put her on the donkey? I wish I had never done it! He strained his eyes on all sides, hoping to see the well-known little *figure* in the distance; and then, disappointed, he stopped short. He had come to

the end of the wood, and beyond it was a common where they had never been. It looked so rough and uninteresting. He could not see a single person on it, only a few sheep here and there. They had been told never to go beyond the wood by themselves. How was it possible that Dolly could have gone so far? She must have got off the donkey, and made the best of her way home. Bob argued to himself that she must have done this, and though he could not quite convince himself, or in any way excuse what he had done, still his one thought was if only Dolly is safe at home. He had struck his leg rather badly in his fall, and as he walked he became very lame; still, as fast as he could go he retraced his steps. He found the basket of nuts just where he had put it down to lift Dolly on the donkey. He caught it up; she would be so disappointed to lose them, he said to himself; and he wended his way back, calling at intervals as he went. He passed through the fields, and up to the house. Every thing looked quiet in the evening sunshine. He could tell the carriage had not returned, for if it had Dick or Jenny would

be sure to have been within sight or hearing. All at this moment he longed for was to see Dolly. He went into the hall, and then to the drawing-room. No one was there. He called "Dolly!" No answer. Then he turned towards the kitchen. In the servants' hall he heard sounds as if tea was going on. He said in a loud tone of voice, "Ann, here, I want to speak to you. Ann, come!"

"What is it, Master Bob?" Ann answered, coming out at once into the passage.

"Where's Dolly?" he asked.

"I've not seen her, sir, since she went out with you."

"Then she's lost, Bob exclaimed; "I don't know where she is; I can't find her anywhere. Do come and help me look for her."

"Lost!" Ann repeated. "Where have you been? No, sir, you're joking," and Ann looked suspicious.

"I'm not joking," Bob returned angrily. "I hate jokes; I mean it."

By this time Mrs. Bounce had come out to know what all the talking was about.

"There's Master Bob says Miss Dolly is lost,"

Ann said, looking now as frightened as she often did on like occasions.

"What do you mean, Master Bob?" Mrs. Bounce asked with some asperity. "What are the rights of what you are saying?"

"I mean," Bob exclaimed furiously, "that Dolly must be found. I put her on a donkey, and I got on another, and I was thrown off; and then, when I awoke, I couldn't find her anywhere, or the donkey, or Toby."

"Then, if that's true, you know you ought never to have put her on the donkey. And where did you find the donkey?"

"It's no good talking," Bob cried; "where's Benjamin? Dolly *must* be found before grandmamma comes home; she'll be so frightened. I tell you it was in the wood, at the end near the common, and the donkeys must have strayed from somewhere, I suppose; but she can't be lost, can she?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Bounce replied; "I can't rightly say. To be sure, what it is to have the care of you children! Benjamin is out with the

carriage; so is Henry. I don't know if Jabez is in the garden. He's the only man on the place. But whatever to do I don't know!"

Mrs. Bounce was no longer speaking to Bob; for he was out of hearing. He had rushed to the garden, and was already shouting at the pitch of his shouting powers, "Jabez! Jabez!"

To his great joy a voice answered, and he ran to the spot from whence the reply came, and, panting for breath, related his story.

"Come at once, Jabez," he concluded; "come, *do*. Dolly *must* be found before grandpapa and grandmamma come home. She may be hurt, or anything. Come, do come!"

Jabez was very slow to take in anything he heard for the first time.

"Miss Dolly losted," he said at last. "Well, to be sure; and where be I to come to?"

"To the wood," and Bob explained further, adding, "Make haste, Jabez. I wish you would make haste."

"Why, sir, I must put the young plants in a drop of water. Whatever am I to do if they die? And did Mrs. Bounce say I was to go?"

"I don't know what she said," Bob exclaimed; "but I say you *must* and *shall* come."

"Very well, Master Bob," Jabez replied, fairly carried away by his impetuosity, and rather frightened by it, if the truth must be told. "You must mind that I 'm growing old, sir," he said, as they hastened across the field. "I can't run like a hare. Why, you 've a hit your face."

"Yes, I know, and I 've hurt my leg too; but I don't care, so that Dolly is found."

"She can't be losted," Jabez said. "Why, folks 'll find her, and bring her back fast enough, to get something from the General. They knows he well enough round about here."

These were the first words of help that Bob had received in his trouble. He quite brightened up.

"Do you think she will be brought back?" he said. "But she might be frightened or hurt," he added. "Make haste, Jabez, and we 'll find her ourselves."

"Yes, yes, we 'll get the reward. Don't you be in such a fixy about it, Master Bob."

"Mother, here's Binny coming with some one upon him;" and the donkey came to a sudden stop.

"But whose donkeys could they have been that we found?"

"Travelling folk," Jabez answered. "There's a fair this week to Bondley."

"Then she must have gone there. We must go after her."

"To Bondley! That's better nor three miles beyond the common. We can't go there now."

"Yes, we must go everywhere," Bob answered.

"We'll find her in the wood," Jabez said.

"Then you take that path," Bob replied, "and I'll take the other; and just call all the way, and I'll be at the common waiting for you; but just do make haste."

"I'm a going as fast as I can," Jabez answered. "I'm just a doing my best for to keep up wi' you."

CHAPTER XI.

"LOST! LOST! LOST!"

AS the carriage drew up at the door of Cranberry Hall, about half an hour later, Dick and Jenny looked round on all sides, expecting to be immediately welcomed by those who had stayed at home. The present had been most successfully bought, and was put away out of sight. Benjamin had received orders what he was to do to prevent any one catching a glimpse of even a parcel.

"How tiresome they are, not to be waiting for us!" Jenny exclaimed.

"I expect they are hiding somewhere," Dick answered.

"Then they'll soon come out; for Dolly can never stay hid long."

"Wait, my dears, you must let me get out of the carriage first," Mrs. Weisell said. "That is good manners, you know. You were forgetting."

Mrs. Bounce was at the door; and whether it was the expression of her face, or that it was a usual greeting on Mrs. Weisell's part, her first words were:

"All well since we've been gone, Bounce?"

"Come in, ma'am, please, before I speak to you," Mrs. Bounce replied. Her tone was mysterious, and with an impulse of curiosity the children were on the point of following; but Dick stopped short.

"Mrs. Bounce won't want to speak to us," he said.

"Yes, sir, you can stay and hear," Mrs. Bounce answered. And then she gave a detailed account of all she knew of Master Bob's doings. He and Jabez had not as yet returned; it was to be hoped that Miss Dolly would be with them when they did so.

Mrs. Bounce made the best of what she had to tell on her mistress' account, but Mrs. Weisell felt very much perplexed and uneasy.

"The General will be home in a few minutes, Bounce," she said; he only left us at the cottages; he will send out for the children at once. I am sorry this has happened. It is late and damp for Miss Dolly. We must fully hope that Jabez and Bob will find her and bring her back." She spoke reassuringly, noticing the alarmed expression on Jenny's face; but Dick would not entertain the idea for a moment of any one being lost, and Bob had told his story so hurriedly that Mrs. Bounce could not give it in very clear terms. As Dick and Jenny went off together, the former said, "That is just Bounce again, making a fuss about nothing, and getting us into a scrape."

"No, I don't think that," Jenny answered. "I wish they'd come back. I shan't feel happy till they do."

At last Bob and Jabez were seen returning, but, alas! without Dolly. Bob was met you may be sure at the door, and asked more questions than he could answer. All he said was, "I *can't* find Dolly. I don't know where she is. Where is grandmamma?" And then he went to the drawing-room,

followed by the others, and repeated his story; told all he knew to his grandmamma and to the General, who had just come in.

"My dear Bob," Mrs. Weisell said, "how could you do such a thing as put her on a donkey you knew nothing about?"

Bob made no reply, but stood looking the picture of despair, listening to all that was addressed to him. Dick and Jenny listened also with sad faces.

"The thing is, what is best to be done," the General said in more cheerful tones. "Come, we shall have little Dolly soon back again. We'll offer a reward for her. I suppose she could say where she lives, couldn't she?"

"I think she would say she lived with you and grandmamma, at Cranberry," Jenny answered.

"There's a fair at Bondley," Mrs. Weisell said.

"Yes; I'll send some one there at once," the General replied.

"Oh, let me go, please!" Bob exclaimed.

"No, my boy, Benjamin must ride there."

"And you are so lame, Bob," Jenny said.

"I don't care," Bob answered passionately, "I don't care for anything but finding Dolly."

"But you cannot help any more in doing that," Mrs. Weisell observed gently. "Your grandpapa is going to send in every direction he can think of, and make every enquiry. I hope Dolly will soon be with us, and I think you have been hurt more than you like to own in your fall."

"It is nothing," Bob said impatiently, and his voice trembled. "Mayn't I go anywhere to help?"

"You cannot help," Mrs. Weisell said, "Jabez told me you were so lame you could hardly walk, and I can see your head is badly knocked. You had better all go to your tea, and I have something I will bring that will do your head good."

"Oh, grandmamma!" Bob began, and then he stopped.

To Bob tears were a disgrace, and as fast as he was able he left the room, his brother and sister following, both sharing his unhappiness, and the latter crying bitterly. There was no thought of going in to dessert that evening. Bob could not leave the sofa, and the others would not leave him;

so in the room where they had had their tea they remained together. Mrs. Bounce came in and attended to Bob's leg with the one remark,

"You won't be able to walk for some days, Master Bob. You've had an ugly blow."

Bob muttered an almost inaudible "thank you" as she finished her remedies. They certainly made the pain much easier, and as after a few minutes' delay she was leaving the room he said aloud, "It is much better, Mrs. Bounce; you've done it a great deal of good."

"I am very glad, sir," Mrs. Bounce replied. She was in her heart quite moved with pity at the sorrow written on everyone's face. But she thought, 'It will be a good lesson for them, and I have not much fear for Miss Dolly. It's well they should feel it for a time.' And with this reflection she went.

Jenny and Dick took up positions on the end of Bob's sofa, and the three talked together in the twilight, and imagined all sorts of things that might have happened to Dolly; for, of course, they could talk of nothing but her. Dick was the most

cheerful on the subject. He believed she would be back very soon, and thought it was nonsense of Jenny to be bringing up all sorts of stories that Ann had told her of children being stolen, and never heard of any more.

"You shouldn't listen to such stuff," he said.

By-and-by Jenny started at a whisper from Bob.

"I am going to find grandmamma," she said. "She told us she would come and see us; but she is so long, I can't wait any longer," and away she went.

Mrs. Weisell was not in the drawing-room, and Jenny ran upstairs to her bedroom, thinking she might be there, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," was the answer she received.

Mrs. Weisell was searching in a drawer of her wardrobe. "I am looking for a soft rag for Bob's leg," she said; "I am afraid he has hurt it badly."

"Oh, grandmamma! he doesn't mind. We don't mind *anything*, if only Dolly comes back safe. Have you heard anything?"

"No, my dear. Your grandpapa is not come in yet. We must hope she will soon be back. Grand-

papa is doing all he can. Now run to the others; I am coming to say good night to you all."

"Then, grandmamma, please do not scold Bob. He is *so* unhappy, he does not know what to do."

Jenny went back and told all she had heard, which was little enough, and they sat longing for Mrs. Weisell to come, which she did not do as soon as they expected; and when she did come, she was looking very anxious, so the children thought, and she began by saying:

"My dear Bob, I hear from Bounce your leg is badly hurt, and a bad blow on your head. You must go to bed very soon, I think."

"Oh, grandmamma, not till Dolly comes, please!"

"I do not think she can come back till to-morrow morning. Grandpapa has offered a reward, and he thinks she will come to-morrow."

"Not till to-morrow!" Bob said, dismay in the tone of his voice.

"I think not. Benjamin has been to Bondley, and the crier has been round to-night, and he will do so again to-morrow morning, and every search

will be made. Grandpapa is very anxious, and so am I."

"Oh, grandmamma, why did I do it?" Bob exclaimed.

"My dear, it was a sad mistake. You must consider a little another time before you act. You are too rash. This must be a lesson to you."

"What reward will grandpapa offer?" Dick asked.

"He has offered twenty pounds," Mrs. Weisell replied.

"Oh, they 'll bring her back for that!" Dick said. "I know they will."

"How can you know?" Bob exclaimed, almost angrily. "Dolly is worth more than twenty pounds any day."

"Much more," Jenny declared.

"I know that," Dick answered, undaunted; "but that 's to us, not to them."

"I think Dick is right," Mrs. Weisell said. "I fully believe little Dolly will be home early to-morrow, none the worse for all that has happened to her we will hope. Grandpapa says so; and now

you must all go to bed; no good staying up any longer."

"But, grandmamma," Bob said, "tell us, do, who is looking for her still."

"Jabez has gone off to Bondley in the spring-cart, and fully hopes to be the one to find her; and Benjamin and Henry are gone in another direction, and every enquiry is being made by others."

"Which is the way to Bondley?" Dick asked.

"Not very far across the common, which you know the beginning of. You come out on a road, and that takes you direct to Bondley."

"Has Jabez gone that way?" Jenny said.

"He could not go through the wood with the cart," Mrs. Weisell replied. "He takes the round by the mill, which brings him out on the same road; and Jabez said to me before he went that he would bring Dolly back 'seaf and soun.' There now, you must go to bed like good children, and think of that. I 'll send Ann to help Bob upstairs. Good night, my dears. God will take care of little Dolly. You will pray to Him to do so."

"Good night, dear grandmamma," they all said,

kissing her fondly. How they loved her! and how grateful Bob felt for her gentle kindness to him that evening, in sparing him all reproaches—reproaches that he felt he could not bear!

"How I hope we shall be happy again to-morrow," Jenny sighed, as they went upstairs.

"You make such a lot of things, Jenny," Dick said; "you 'll always be unhappy. You can't make the best of anything."

"There 's no best in this," Bob answered sharply. He was limping upstairs behind the others, supported by Ann's arm. "There 's no best in it," he repeated; "and if you 'd done it, Dick, you 'd be as miserable as I am—as horridly miserable!"

Bob was right; for if we smart from a trouble we justly feel we have brought on ourselves, it must be harder to bear than it can be to others, however much they may share in it. Jenny and Dolly always went to bed by choice at the same hour, and their brothers not long after. Often they went upstairs all together, and on those occasions there was plenty of talking and laughing by the way. More than once the General's voice had sounded

from below: "Well, boys and girls, all wide awake! Grandmamma expects you to be sound off in ten minutes." Then Dolly would reply, peeping through the banisters, "Oh, grandpapa, that's much too quick! We never could do it; but we will be just as quick as ever we can." To-night there was very little talking, and no laughing. Jenny said, "I hope your leg will be better to-morrow, Bob;" and then she went into her solitary room. Oh, how dull and empty it seemed without Dolly! She knelt down and said her prayers, thinking more of the words than usual when she asked God to take care of her little sister. By-and-by Ann came and brushed her hair, and was very kind and sympathizing. Poor Ann! she thought a great deal of the trouble of the day; but she was not cheerful or hopeful, and left Jenny feeling more unhappy than ever, nearly as unhappy as poor Bob, with his bitter reflections, and his aching leg.

Jenny looked at Dolly's little empty bed. There was the pillow on which every evening she laid her little round head, with its many brown plaits

sticking out on all sides—"pig-tails," as Bob and Dick called them, whenever they chanced to see them. There was the pillow without a crease, and Dolly's little dressing-gown and slippers on a chair by the bedside.

To Jenny it was too sad a sight. She threw herself into her own bed, with the tears running down her cheeks, and she lay still and sobbed, and sobbed, till later, when Mrs. Weisell came gently in, shading with one hand the light she carried, she found with satisfaction that Jenny, like her brothers, had, as she hoped she would, forgotten her sorrow, and gone to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

BLACKBERRIES AND BREAD NOT SUCH BAD FARE.

AND where was Dolly all this time—Dolly, whom every one was hunting for? When she had trotted away so fast on the donkey, she once or twice called out, "Bob, are you coming?" but the trees soon hid him from her sight, and she saw nothing of his fall. She quite enjoyed her ride without a thought of its having anything but a happy ending, and she expected every minute that Bob would appear. "There was not a donkey even in Swanage that went like this," she said to herself; "how I wish grandpapa would buy him for me; but I don't like going so far on the common. I wish he would turn back;" and she put her hands down and patted

him, and tried to push his neck round in the direction from which they had come; for, there being no bridle, this was all she could do to guide him according to her wishes. No notice would he take. He pricked up his ears, as if he knew his own mind well enough, and on he went across the common, where Dolly had never been before; and as he came near the end of the common, close to the road, which was not a wide one, in a hollow, sheltered bit of ground, Dolly saw what she and Jenny called "a travelling house." A ragged-looking girl sprang up from a seat on the grass, and called in a shrill voice, "Mother, here's Binny coming with some one upon him;" and the donkey came to a sudden stop. A woman came to the door of the van, and looked out. Jenny and Dolly had so often wished to peep into one of these travelling houses, and had wondered what they could be like inside. They thought it so strange to see a chimney on the top, and the smoke coming from it, as it journeyed along the roads. There were brushes, and baskets, and chairs hanging all round it outside. The woman came up to Dolly.

"Where be come from, little miss?" she said.

"I'm come from the wood," Dolly answered. "I don't know whose donkey it is. Bob put me on it."

"Come from the 'ood!" the woman said. "It be our donkey."

"Please take me off, and let me go home." Dolly was frightened, and began to cry.

"There, don't cry, the woman said; "we'll take ye home; but you must bide a bit. There's no one to take ye now."

"Oh, I must go," Dolly cried; "they'll expect me."

"Where do you live then?" the woman asked.

"With grandpapa and grandmamma," Dolly answered; "and this is my dog Toby;" for Toby had followed his mistress.

The little ragged girl had stood close by listening to every word, and she looked at Dolly with eager eyes; and when she saw her cry, seemed very anxious to say something to her; but she did not, and her mother turned, and spoke sharply to her.

"Go away, B'linda, and find t' other donkey. You 'd no business to let 'un go so far."

"There he be a coming by hisself," the girl answered. "I knew they 'd come back fast enough," she added.

Dolly looked up and saw—yes, she was sure it was—the very donkey Bob had wished to ride. She had taken such notice of it, she knew it was the very one. Now Bob would not come to look for her; something must have happened to him; she was lost indeed! She sank down on the grass, and cried and sobbed, Toby lying close by her side, making dismal whines in chorus, and from time to time giving furious little barks. The woman took no notice at first of Dolly's outburst of grief. She had gone towards the donkey with a halter; but presently she called in a scolding voice to her daughter:

"Go to the child, B'linda, and take care of her till we are off. We 'll go in to Bondley to once."

Belinda came towards Dolly.

"Don't cry," she said; "mother 'll take you home. They 'll be wanting you to home, I guess."

"Yes," Dolly answered, looking up; "they are wanting me now, I know."

"Will they give a reward?" she said, with a sharp look in her eyes.

"I don't know," Dolly replied, with a puzzled air; "but my home is through the wood. Won't you take me there?"

"No; mother is going to Bondley first. Father's selling things in t' fair. Ha' you seen the fair?"

"No," Dolly said.

"Then you shall; but don't you cry; that'll anger mother, and we'll take you home, and we're going into the cart now."

Dolly dried her eyes. If she was really going to be taken home, there was nothing to cry for. "Don't be so unhappy, Toby, she said; "we are going home presently." Toby thus admonished jumped up, shook himself, and pricked his ears, as much as to say, "I'm ready." In a few minutes the woman's voice was heard again calling.

"Come along," Belinda said, taking Dolly's hand, and pulling her on as fast as she could go.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Dolly asked.

"Mother won't like for to wait," was the answer she received.

"Isn't your mother kind to you?" Dolly said.

"I like father best," Belinda replied; "but mother's mostly kind when she 's not angered."

It was a very surprising event to Dolly, finding herself inside one of the "travelling houses." With curious eyes she looked round at everything, and whispered questions to Belinda, which it seemed to amuse her greatly to answer. They had done as they were bid, and seated themselves at the far end of the van, Toby having followed them there. The woman sat at the entrance driving. Dolly was very glad of this, she felt afraid of her, but she liked talking to Belinda. From her she heard all particulars of her life, how it was spent travelling from place to place. She said her father hoped to make some money at Bondley fair, as otherwise he would be obliged to sell the van; for not long ago their horse had died suddenly, and the donkeys were not their own, only hired from acquaintances. They were not strong enough for their load, and it had been to give them a rest that they had waited

on the common; "and mother beat me for letting them go off," Belinda said, "they's worse to look after nor anything, and I was just tired and went to sleep; but they'll always come back, they will."

"They are such good donkeys," Dolly said.

"One of 'em is good, and one of 'em is wicked," Belinda replied; "but father sets a deal on them. He'd like to have them, only he couldn't buy 'em."

Before reaching the town the van stopped, and Belinda's mother told her she might get out; and she lifted Dolly to the ground, and brought out presently a loaf of bread, and cut a slice and offered it to her. Now, Dolly was not accustomed to eating dry bread, and she looked at it in surprise.

"Will ye have it?" the woman said; "be hungry?"

"Yes," Dolly answered, taking it at last; after a minute's pause adding, "Thank you."

She saw Belinda seize with pleasure a much larger piece.

"Come 'long wi' me," she said, "we'll go and get blackberries. They grows down there," pointing to a field.

"Mother 'll stay here to-night, I 'spect, unless

father comes to say we must go into the fair. I think we'll go in to-morrow morning, and not afore."

"Oh!" Dolly exclaimed, "but what shall I do? I can't stay here all night. Your mother said she'd take me home."

"So she will," Belinda answered; "must you be going to once? I'll be good to you, and take care of you."

"You're very kind, Belinda," Dolly replied, "but I want so to go home."

"Who've you got to home?"

"Why, I've got Bob, and Jenny, and Dick, and grandpapa, and grandmamma, and lots of people that I don't love so much—well, not so much as I love Toby."

"You've got a many," Belinda said; "I've got no one but father and mother, all the rest is gone."

"I am so sorry, Belinda," Dolly answered; "you shall come and see us in our home."

"Among the ladies and gentlemen," Belinda said; "no, I never could."

While they talked, they picked and eat blackberries; and Dolly found that blackberries and bread, and fresh water from a stream, Belinda having brought a cup, was not, after all, such very bad fare, and she really forgot for a time how anxious she was to get home. Belinda was so kind to her, and told her such interesting stories of all she did, and all she was looking forward to seeing at the fair the next day.

"Have you ever seen 'Punch and Judy?'" Dolly asked.

"Many a time," Belinda answered, laughing at such a question.

"I never have in my life," Dolly said.

"Not seen 'Punch and Judy.' Well, then, I never. You 'll see 'un to-morrow."

"No," Dolly replied, "I must go home to-morrow; you know I must, Belinda."

"There, then, so you shall. But there 's the pig wi' two heads this time, and father's going to give me a chance to see it. Wouldn't you like to see it too?"

"I should like to see it," Dolly answered, "I

like to see everything; but I don't know if grandmamma would wish me to."

"We 'll have very hard times this winter," Belinda said presently, "if we don't make up this summer; we 'll just have hardly anything to eat come the winter, and very little to buy coal with. Oh, my, I wish 'twas always summer!"

"I am so sorry," Dolly said, "perhaps grandpapa would give you some money. He is very kind."

"Money to buy a horse," Belinda said; "that 's what we want. The donkeys won't never do so well."

So Belinda and Dolly sat talking together, and becoming quite friends. As she listened, Dolly thought she had never heard of such hard things as Belinda had to bear. She spoke of the last winter, of her mother ill, and her father away; and described how she went out to sell things, as many as she could carry, and no one would buy them, and then, tired and hungry, she had to carry them all back again. She did not speak as if she was complaining; only telling facts to which she was well accustomed. But on Dolly they made a deep im-

pression; for she had never heard of such hardships before, from any one who had to bear them.

"I wish I had some money to give you," she said; "but I've spent it all: but I'm not poor, and I know grandpapa and grandmamma will give you money."

"No, no, then, they won't," Belinda answered, laughing; "but we'll get the reward, if 'tis offered."

What this "reward" meant Dolly could not understand, and at that moment Belinda's mother called her, and so they got up and ran towards the van, Toby close at Dolly's heels. He seemed to know so well his little mistress was where she ought not to be, and to feel it was his duty to take care of her. A man was talking to Belinda's mother, and Toby ran forward, and barked sharply at him.

"Quiet with you," he exclaimed in rough tones.

"Call him back," Belinda said; "call him back."

Dolly did so, feeling much frightened. She was not used to hearing rough words, and she sat down on the grass, and put her arms round Toby's neck. Belinda went up to her father and mother, and a long conversation took place; but Dolly did not

attend to it. If she listened, she could not understand. The talking was so different to any she had heard before, and the only word she caught more than once was "reward." By-and-by the woman came up to her.

"Come in, little missy," she said in a gentler voice than she had spoken in before, "and we'll put you to bed for to-night in the best place we have."

"I can't go to bed," Dolly exclaimed, bursting into tears; "not in there. You said you would take me home, and they want me at home."

The woman went away, and talked for some time to her husband. Then she returned to Dolly's side.

"We'll take you home to-morrow; that's certain," she said. "My man says so. So, come now —come."

But Dolly only cried the more, and did not attempt to stir.

"Here, B'linda," the woman called, "come here." And Belinda came and sat down by Dolly, and persuaded her.

"Come in, do," she said; "mother'll be angry if you don't, and you'll go home to-morrow for sure. There now, father has been telling me you will. And we are not to go into Bondley fair to-night; we are just to bide here."

"Then we shan't see the pig with two heads," Dolly said, lifting up her tear-stained face from her wet pinafore. At this moment Toby was keeping a special guard over her handkerchief, which lay, a dejected-looking little ball, by her side, "no use," as she had whispered sadly to herself, "I have cried so many tears upon it."

"We'll see 'un to-morrow," Belinda answered soothingly. "Now don't 'ee cry so."

"There now, come along;" and she coaxed Dolly up the steps into the van, Toby following.

"Must I go to bed there?" Dolly said, her voice broken by sobs, and looking at a place on a box at the further end, which had something the appearance of a bed, and which had in fact been prepared expressly for her.

"Yes," Belinda answered; "mother put it like that for you. She is gone out; but I'll just stay

with you, after I've been down with the pitchers for water."

"I can't undress," Dolly said, "I've got no dressing-gown or slippers, and not even my night-gown, so I must lie down and go to sleep just like I am. Oh, dear! and I haven't washed my face even."

"I'm a going for some water," Belinda said, "and I'll be back in five minutes."

Left alone with Toby only for that short space of time, Dolly's tears began again to flow.

"Oh, Toby!" she said, "what shall I do? You don't mind a bit, because you don't like being washed, and you've no undressing to do."

Toby looked up, and licked her hands. "You are a dear dog, Toby," Dolly said; "and you do always wish to be good, I know you do, but I am so unhappy."

"Oh, Belinda, I am so glad you have come back. Shall I help you?"

"No, thank you," Belinda answered, panting; "why, I've runned as fast as I could go, purpose not to leave you. Have I been long?"

"I thought so," Dolly replied. "Am I to wash my face in that?"

"That's all we've got," Belinda said.

It was a tin pan, that looked to Dolly very like a saucepan. "But there's no sponge!" she exclaimed.

"There, use your hands, that'll do 'stead of a sponge," Belinda replied.

Dolly spread her little fingers in the water, and raised her hands to her face.

"Why, it all runs away," she said, "I can't make my face wet all over."

"There, put your fingers together," Belinda replied, "now up with it."

Dolly laughed as she splashed the water on all sides. Her tears were now quite forgotten.

"What a funny towel," she cried, as she took one that Belinda handed to her; "not a bit like ours at home."

"Now, you must make haste to bed," Belinda said, "mother said she'd be in 'fore long."

"Very well," Dolly replied, and she climbed upon her bed. "Dear me, its so hard, like wood," she said.

She lay down, and Belinda drew an old patched counterpane from a corner, and tenderly and gently covered her over.

Dolly lay still for a few moments thinking, then she sprang up,

"Belinda!" she called, "here, I haven't said my prayers."

Belinda, who had gone out to tie up the donkeys, came back on hearing her name.

"What, then, do you want?" she asked, looking in at the door.

"Oh, I need not have called you," Dolly said, "but it was because I haven't said my prayers."

"I don't say mine, not often," Belinda answered; "but you can just say yours, and I'll listen."

Dolly knelt up in her bed and repeated them, and then she lay down again. "Toby, don't go away," she murmured. "Shall I go home for certain to-morrow, Belinda?" and she raised her voice.

"Yes, for sure."

"I don't think I shall go to sleep all night," Dolly observed with a sigh. And she looked through the half-open door at the stars shining out, a few at

first visible, and then so many. And what a strange thing, she thought, had happened to her, that she should be lying there, and what adventures she would have to tell Bob, and Dick, and Jenny. It would be a long time before she saw them, staying awake made the night seem as if it would never end. Still she made up her mind she must stay awake, when quite suddenly and unexpectedly she fell asleep, while Toby's bright eyes kept watch, and he greeted every sound and any approach to his little mistress with a low growl. Faithful little Toby!

CHAPTER XIII.

"I'M WORTH A THREEPENNY BIT."

JABEZ, when he started that evening with the cart to Bondley to look for Dolly, had fully made up his mind he would find her; and when people make up their minds to do a thing, it is astonishing how many difficulties vanish at once. Jabez was slow to take in any new idea. For some time he had not been able to believe Miss Dolly could be really missing, and had thought Master Bob off his head when he shouted so madly for him in the garden. But now he had comprehended the importance and seriousness of the case, and he said to Mrs. Weisell while receiving her orders before leaving,

"Ma'am, I'll bring her back 'fore the night's over. Tell Master Bob so."

And, as we know, the children had been told Jabez's brave resolve. Dolly was, too, a great pet of his own. She had idle hours when the others were at their lessons, and these she spent for the most part in the garden, and many conversations took place between her and Jabez relative to his work, or anything that might be passing in her little head at the time. When he was busy amongst the vegetable beds, she would stand on the gravel path, her hands behind her, that being her favourite attitude, and she would begin her questions. "What are you doing that for, Jabez?" "What do you 'spect will come out of those seeds?" "Why don't you give those poor things more water?"

"'Twould kill them, Miss Dolly. 'Twould be too much for 'em."

"Oh, no, I don't think so, Jabez! It would make them happy. I'm going to give my flowers water five times a day for a speriment; but Jenny says she won't."

"How many years have you been a gardener, Jabez?" Dolly asked one day.

"All my years pretty near," Jabez replied.

"Dear, dear, what a long time! I hope you 'll soon be rich enough not to be obliged to work any more."

Jabez laughed, you may be sure, at the joke which having no work to do, and being rich, appeared to him; but he thought it was a kind little heart that had prompted such a wish.

In the kitchen Jabez had often given it as his opinion that Miss Dolly was the "cliverest young lady" he 'd ever met; and his affection being great for all "Master Robert Richard's children," as he usually called them, his determination on this occasion to find the missing pet of the family carried him through such a search and enquiry, that about ten o'clock, Toby, hearing a familar voice, started from his mistress' feet, and looking out into the darkness with a wow, wow, wow, said, as plainly as words could have done, "Here she is."

Jabez was in company with the owner of the van, and had heard from him and his wife all that we know. He directed them to come to Cranberry on the following day; but Miss Dolly was to be given up to him at once. Mrs. Weisell had pro-

vided him with shawls, and in these, fast asleep still, little Dolly was wrapped. As soft a place as possible was made for her to lie on in the cart, and triumphantly Jabez drove off, poor Belinda standing by, with the tears actually in her eyes. "And niver said a word to me," she muttered to herself, "and won't speak to me per'aps to-morrow, and 'll just forget me, that 's all." Belinda little knew the goodness of Dolly's heart to think such things of her.

Through all the drive Dolly slept on; nor did she wake when Jabez carried her into the house. Only General Weisell was downstairs waiting for his return.

"That 's right, Jabez," he said, "you always were a clever fellow at finding anything, when once you set about it. You 'll find some supper in the kitchen. I 'll take her upstairs."

And Dolly was carried up to Mrs. Weisell's room, there to receive gentle kisses and soft words of welcome.

"Whatever we do, we must not wake her; that would be such a shock," Mrs. Weisell said. "Carry her to her bed, my dear, and I 'll come and cover

her up. We will not rouse her to undress her. Poor little dear, she is quite tired out!"

So Dolly was laid in her little bed, and then very gently covered over. She opened her eyes dreamily; but there was nothing unusual in finding herself in her own bed, and seeing grandmamma bending down over her; so she buried her little head in the pillow, and went off to sleep again as soundly as if she was in her first nap.

When Jenny had sobbed herself into forgetfulness, her last wish had been to see Dolly safe in the little bed in the opposite corner, and all her sleep that night was full of the same wish. It quite troubled her, and in her dreams she hunted the whole country over in search of Dolly—even went to Swanage, and actually discovered her at last in the most unlikely place in the world—in the cabin on board the schooner, which somehow or other had saved her from a watery grave. Saved she was, and Jenny had brought her safe home in some wonderfully quick manner, when a bright ray of sun shone across her face, and she started up, rubbing her eyes, and fully expecting her

dream to prove itself true, as her first glance flew to where Dolly ought to be. And there she was! There was no mistaking the reality of the little brown head! In an instant she was by her side.

"She is actually come!" she exclaimed, and lowering her voice, "actually come!" she repeated; "and I dreamt she was found. Oh, I must kiss her! No, I won't disturb her. Oh, joy, joy! I wonder if the boys know?"

She hastily put on her dressing-gown, and ran to the door of her brothers' room.

"Bob!" she said; "Bob!" in a loud whisper.

"Well," his voice answered, "what is it? Have you heard anything!"

"She is come back. She is asleep in her bed."

"Hurrah! Are you sure? Stop; I must see her."

In a few minutes Bob and Dick and Jenny were standing at Dolly's bedside. Jenny thought afterwards they must have borne a great likeness to the picture of the three bears gazing at Silverhair as they did in the old story you all know so well. But, unlike Silverhair, Dolly did not spring up,

and fly to the window, and jump out. She slept quietly on, and on tip-toe every one retreated when they had looked enough to feel perfectly satisfied of the reality.

When at last Dolly did awake, she felt no surprise at finding herself in her bed; only very much astonished to see she was dressed in her clothes, quite ready to get up, as she expressed it afterwards, "all but my shoes." However, in a few minutes the events of the past evening came back to her.

"Oh, Jenny," she cried, "wake up. It's so funny to be here, when I never went to bed here. Where is Belinda?"

Jenny, who was only waiting to be sure that Dolly had roused, was up in a minute, and listening with deep interest to the story which Dolly told and retold of all her adventures. Grandpapa and grandmamma heard them after breakfast, and then Dolly ended by saying—

"Oh, grandpapa, you mustn't scold Bob at all; for he's hurt a great deal, and he is much sorrier than he ever was before, and he has been *very*

unhappy; he told me so." And she stopped, and looked up for an answer.

"Very well, Dolly, we'll let him off easy this time," General Weisell said.

"And, grandpapa, you will give a good 'reward' to Belinda; that's what she wants."

"Indeed!" General Weisell replied, laughing. "Well, I am going to see to your new friends by-and-by."

"Belinda is the only one that is a bit my friend," Dolly rejoined earnestly; "I'm very glad I've not got her father and mother. You know her mother always calls her 'Blinda;' but her real name is Be-lin-da, and that's what I always call her."

"It's a very grand name," Jenny said; "much grander than ours."

"I think it is *very* pretty," Dolly observed.

Bob's leg was still so bad that, though he was allowed to get up, he was not to try to walk about. Under these circumstances, there was no school for him. The others went, and very dull he found it at home all by himself. He had plenty of time to think and form good resolves,

and he made many. Dolly on her return from school installed herself as head nurse, to wait upon him and run his errands, and with this office she was delighted.

That evening, when the children were waiting for the summons to dessert, they clustered round Bob's sofa, as they had done on the previous evening, a smaller and far more subdued party.

They had been having all sorts of fun together, and games as riotous as Bob's lameness would admit of, had been played. He had been acting in turn schoolmaster, judge, and finally king; and now his subjects were tired, and conversation had succeeded to games, the occurrences of yesterday still the chief topic, and Bob had been explaining the word which Dolly had never thoroughly understood as applied to herself.

"And how much, then, would be given as a reward for me?" she asked.

"We know what grandpapa offered," Dick said. "I am going to ask him if he has paid it."

"How much was it?" Dolly repeated.

"It was twenty pounds," Jenny answered.

"Twenty pounds! Only for me!" Dolly exclaimed, with a look of astonishment. "I did not think it would be half as much as that!"

"How much did you think you were worth, Dolly?" Bob said; "come, tell us."

"Well, then, more than pennies," she said with emphasis.

"About threepence," Dick remarked, knowing that this was Dolly's favourite sum.

Dolly thought a moment. "Yes, yes," she cried, "I think threepence, but not in pennies," she added. "I mean a real silver threepenny bit."

"With a hole in it," Dick suggested.

"Yes, with a hole in it," Dolly repeated.

"Oh, Dolly, you are worth hundreds more than that," Jenny exclaimed, quite vexed at the idea, which Dolly had fallen in with so complacently. "Why, you are worth hundreds of pounds, you know you are, to mother and us, and everyone who cares for you."

Dolly opened her eyes wide, as if to take in and believe such an assertion was difficult, but a sound at that moment diverted her thoughts.

"There," she cried, "there's the bell for dessert. I must run. I am going to bring Bob's in to him, grandmamma said I might, all by myself." And away she went.

The children were very interested in hearing of the visit of Belinda, with her father and mother; but Dolly was sadly disappointed to find she was not likely to see her friend again just yet. She had called that morning with her father and mother while they were at school, and was, as Mrs. Weisell related, too shy to speak a word.

"When she talked to me like anything!" Dolly exclaimed with clasped hands. "How sorry I am I was out!"

"And did you give them the twenty pounds?" Jenny asked.

"Ah, the reward!" General Weisell answered; "that was grandmamma's affair. Yes, she gave them the twenty pounds."

"How glad I am!" Dolly cried. "Now they'll be able to buy a horse easily—two or three horses, I should think."

"One bad one, more likely," Dick observed.

"Well, I am glad they have got it," Jenny said; "and, grandpapa, Dolly didn't think you would have offered half as much. She thought she was only worth a threepenny bit. Actually that was what she thought."

"Oh, that was what little Dolly thought she was worth, was it?" General Weisell said, as he lifted Dolly from her chair to his knee, and gave her a kiss.

"When she talked to *me* like anything," Dolly exclaimed with clasped hands; "how sorry I am I was out!"

Belinda's mother had promised Mrs. Weisell to call again the next time they were passing that way, so Dolly still hopes to meet her old friend. She does not forget her, but often talks of her, and of her kindness to her when she was in trouble. Jenny has quite made up her mind when she grows up to write a book. Dolly's adventures are to be told in it, and Belinda is to be the heroine of the story. Perhaps this being the case, I ought not to have told them to you; but it is likely to be so long before Jenny's book comes out, that I feel

sure you will welcome it when it does so, as an old friend with a new face.

I am quite sorry to tell you no more about the young Weisells, I am so fond of them all; but I feel I must bring *my* story to an end, and perhaps since Bob has quite determined for the future, as General Weisell advises, to "look before he leaps," and as Mrs. Weisell recommends, to "reflect before he acts," I might not have such entertaining things to tell you as I have hitherto had. General Weisell still asks occasionally, "Well, my dear, what new pickle have the children got into?"

And usually Mrs. Weisell has something to relate in reply, but she considers that Bob and Dick are growing good steady boys. School is the place the General still advocates, saying he is afraid Miss Straight has more than she can manage sometimes. To this Mrs. Weisell demurs. She says Miss Straight gives them a good character, and speaks of Dick as likely to distinguish himself some day, he is so fond of his books.

"There are plenty of examinations waiting for him, then," the General replies; "now's his time."

"Yes, my dear; but getting on in that way is not my dearest wish for him, or for any one of them. It makes me happy to see them good, truthful, affectionate children, and I cannot wish the boys to begin their school life just yet. We must keep them with us a little longer."

So for the present the children are living, as I have described, with their grandparents. The day, however, though not fixed, cannot be far distant when Bob and Dick will go to school. Jenny and Dolly quite believe that day will be the most unhappy day in their whole lives. But, after all, it will very likely not be so bad as they expect and imagine; few things are, and grandpapa says that he and grandmamma will want them more than ever to cheer them up when the boys are gone, and they both feel it will be very pleasant to be of so much use as they intend to be. General Weisell now often calls Dolly his little "Threepenny bit." It is his pet name for her.

Then when the trial comes, of Bob and Dick's departure for school, there will be the pleasure of meeting again in prospect; and Jenny and Dolly

have such good spirits, and love each other so much, I feel sure they will be very happy, while looking forward to being much happier three times a year, when the holidays come, and they reunite at that most delightful of all places, *Cranberry Hall.*

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