

DICK
and
DOLLY

CAROLYN WELLS

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“SHE SAW A LITTLE GIRL COMING EAGERLY TOWARD HER” (Page [95](#))

DICK AND DOLLY

BY
CAROLYN WELLS

AUTHOR OF
THE MARJORIE BOOKS,
THE PATTY BOOKS,
THE TWO LITTLE WOMEN SERIES,

ILLUSTRATED BY
ADA BUDELL



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CHAPTER I

THE BROOK

Dick and Dolly were twins and had been twins for nine years.

Most of these years had been spent with Grandma Banks and Aunt Helen, for Dick and Dolly were orphaned when they were tiny tots, and Aunt Helen Banks was their mother's sister.

Then, about two years ago, Grandma Banks had died, and now Aunt Helen was to be married and go far away across the sea to live.

So their Chicago home was broken up, and the twins were sent to the old Dana homestead in Connecticut, to live with their father's people.

This transfer of their dwelling-place didn't bother Dick and Dolly much, for they were philosophical little people and took things just as they happened, and, moreover, they were so fond of each other, that so long as they were together, it didn't matter to them where they were.

But to the two people who lived in the old Dana place, and who were about to receive the twin charges, it mattered a great deal.

Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie Dana were maiden ladies of precise and methodical habits, and to have their quiet home invaded by two unknown children was, to say the least, disturbing.

But then Dick and Dolly were the children of their own brother, and so, of course they were welcome, still the aunts felt sure it would make a great difference in the household.

And indeed it did.

From the moment of the twins' arrival,—but I may as well tell you about that moment.

You see, Aunt Helen was so busy with her wedding preparations that she didn't want to take the time to bring Dick and Dolly all the way from Chicago to Heatherton, Connecticut, so she sent them East in charge of some friends of hers who chanced to be coming. Mr. and Mrs. Halkett were good-natured people, and agreed to see the twins safely to Dana Dene, the home of the waiting aunts.

And the aunts were waiting somewhat anxiously.

They had never seen Dick and Dolly since they were tiny babies, and as they had heard vague reports of mischievous tendencies, they feared for the peace and quiet of their uneventful lives.

"But," said Miss Abbie to Miss Rachel, "we can't expect children to act like grown people. If they're only tidy and fairly good-mannered, I shall be thankful."

"Perhaps we can train them to be," responded Miss Rachel, hopefully; "nine is not very old, to begin with. I think they will be tractable at that age."

"Let us hope so," said Miss Abbie.

The Dana ladies were not really old,—even the family Bible didn't credit them with quite half a century apiece,—but they were of a quiet, sedate type, and were disturbed by the least invasion of their daily routine.

Life at Dana Dene was of the clock-work variety, and mistresses and servants fell into step and trooped through each day, without a variation from the pre-arranged line of march.

But, to their honest souls, duty was pre-eminent, even over routine, and now, as it was clearly their duty to take their brother's children into their household, there was no hesitation, but there was apprehension.

For who could say what two nine-year-olds would be like?

But in accordance with their sense of duty, the Misses Dana accepted the situation and went to work to prepare rooms for the new-comers.

Two large sunny bedrooms, Dolly's sweet and dainty, Dick's more boyish, were made ready, and another large room was planned to be used as a study or rainy-day playroom for them both. Surely, the aunts were doing the right thing,—if the children would only respond to the gentle treatment, and not be perfect little savages, all might yet be well.

Now it happened that when Mr. and Mrs. Halkett reached New York with their young charges, the trip from Chicago had made Mrs. Halkett so weary and indisposed that she preferred to remain in New York while her husband took the twins to Heatherton. It was not a long trip, perhaps three hours or less on the train, so Mr. Halkett started off to fulfil his trust and present Dick and Dolly at the door of their new home, assuring his wife that he would return on the first train possible after accomplishing his errand. Mrs. Halkett took pride in seeing that the children were very spick and span, and prettily arrayed, and gave them many injunctions to keep themselves so.

Sturdy Dick looked fine in his grey Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, with wide white collar and correct tie. Pretty little Dolly was in white piqué, very stiff and clean, with a tan-coloured coat and flower-trimmed hat.

The twins looked alike, and had the same big, dark eyes, but Dick's hair was a dark mass of close-cropped curls, while Dolly's was a tangle of fluffy golden ringlets. This striking effect of fair hair and dark eyes made her an unusually attractive-looking child, and though they had never thought of it themselves, the twins were a very beautiful pair of children. Docilely obedient to Mrs. Halkett's injunctions, they sat quietly in the train, and did nothing that could by any possibility be termed naughty.

Truth to tell, they were a little awed at the thought of the two aunts, whom they did not yet know, but had every reason to believe were not at all like Auntie Helen. They chatted together, as they looked out of the window at the landscape and stations, and Mr. Halkett read his paper, and then looked over his timetable to see how soon he could get back to New York.

There was a train that left Heatherton for New York about half an hour after their own arrival, so he hoped he could leave the twins at Dana Dene and return to the metropolis on that train. But owing to a delay of some sort they did not reach the Heatherton station until about twenty minutes after schedule time.

After the train Mr. Halkett desired to take back to New York, there was no other for two hours, and greatly annoyed was that gentleman. When they stood at last on the station platform, a pleasant-faced Irishman approached and informed Mr. Halkett that he was from Dana Dene, and had been sent to meet Master Dick and Miss Dolly. As the man appeared so capable and responsible, Mr. Halkett was tempted to put the children in his care, and return himself at once to New York.

He explained about the trains, and told of his wife's illness, and the intelligent Michael said at once:

"Shure, sor, do yez go back to New York. I'll be afther takin' the childher safe to the house. Don't yez moind, sor, but go right along. Lave all to me, sor."

Impressed with the man's decisive words, and sure of his trustworthiness, Mr. Halkett assisted the children into the carriage, and bidding them good-bye turned back to the station.

Dolly looked a little wistful as he turned away, for though no relative, he had been a kind friend, and now she felt like a stranger in a strange land.

But Dick was with her, so nothing else really mattered. She slipped her hand in her brother's, and then Michael picked up his reins and they started off.

It was early May, and it chanced to be warm and pleasant. The carriage was an open one, a sort of landau, and the twins gazed around with eager interest.

"Great, isn't it, Dolly?" exclaimed Dick, as they drove along a winding road, with tall trees and budding shrubs on either side.

"Oh, yes!" returned Dolly. "It's beautiful. I love the country a whole heap better than Chicago. Oh, Dick, there's woods,—real woods!"

"So it is, and a brook in it! I say, Michael, can't we get out here a minute?"

"I think not," said the good-natured coachman. "The leddies is forninst, lookin' for yez, and by the same token, we're afther bein' late as it is."

"Yes, I know," said Dick, "but we won't stay a minute. Just let us run in and see that brook. It's such a dandy! I never saw a brook but once or twice in all my life."

"Yez didn't! The saints presarve us! Wherever have yez lived?"

"In the city,—in Chicago. Do stop a minute, please, Michael."

"Please, Michael," added Dolly, and her sweet voice and coaxing glance were too much for Michael's soft heart.

Grumbling a little under his breath, he pulled up his horses, and let the children get out.

"Just a minute, now," he said, warningly. "I'll bring yez back here some other day. Can yez get under the brush there?"

"We'll go over," cried Dick, as he climbed and scrambled over a low thicket of brush.

Dolly scrambled through, somehow, and the two children that emerged on the other side of the brush were quite different in appearance from the two sedate-looking ones that Mr. Halkett had left behind him.

Dick's white collar had received a smudge, his stocking was badly torn, and his cheek showed a long scratch.

Dolly's white frock was a sight! Her pretty tan coat had lost a button or two, and her hat was still in the bushes.

"Hey, Doddy, hey, for the brook!" shouted Dick, and grasping each other's hands, they ran for the rippling water.

"Oh!" cried Dolly, her eyes shining. "Did you *ever*!"

To the very edge of the brook they went, dabbling their fingers in the clear stream, and merrily splashing water on each other.

All this would have been a harmless performance enough if they had been in play clothes, but the effect on their travelling costumes was most disastrous.

Leaning over the mossy bank to reach the water caused fearful green stains on white piqué and on light-grey knickerbockers. Hands became grimy, and faces hot and smudgy. But blissfully careless of all this, the children frolicked and capered about, rejoiced to find the delightful country spot and quite oblivious to the fact that they were on their way to their new home.

"Let's wade," said Dick, and like a flash, off came four muddy shoes, and four grass-greened stockings. Oh, how good the cool ripply water did feel! and how they chuckled with glee as they felt the wavelets plashing round their ankles.

Across the brook were the dearest wild flowers,—pink, yellow, and white.

"We must gather some," said Dolly. "Can we wade across?"

"Yep; I guess so. It doesn't look deep. Come on."

Taking hands again, they stepped cautiously, and succeeded in crossing the shallow brook, though, incidentally, well dampening the piqué skirt, and the grey knickerbockers.

Sitting down on the mossy bank, they picked handfuls of the flowers and wondered what they were.

“Hollo! Hollo!” called Michael’s voice from the road, where he sat holding his horses.

“All right, Michael! In a minute,” shrilled back the childish voices.

And they really meant to go in a minute, but the fascination of the place held them, and they kept on picking flowers, and grubbing among the roots and stones at the edge of the water.

“We really ought to go,” said Dolly. “Come on, Dick. Oh, look at the birds!”

A large flock of birds flew low through the sky, and as they circled and wheeled, the children watched them eagerly.

“They’re birds coming North for the summer,” said Dick. “See those falling behind! They don’t like the way the flock is going, and they’re going to turn back.”

“So they are! We must watch them. There, now they’ve decided to go on, after all! Aren’t they queer?”

“Hollo! Hollo! Come back, yez bad childher! Come back, I say!”

“Yes, Michael, in a minute,” rang out Dolly’s sweet, bird-like voice.

“In a minute, nothin’! Come now, roight sthrait away! Do yez hear?”

“Yes, we’re coming,” answered Dick, and together they started to wade back across the brook.

Then there were shoes and stockings to be put on, and with sopping wet feet, and no towels, this is not an easy task.

They tugged at the unwilling stockings and nearly gave up in despair, but succeeded at last in getting them on, though the seams were far from the proper straight line at the back. Shoes were not so hard to put on, but were impossible to button without a buttonhook, so had to remain unbuttoned.

Meantime, Michael was fairly fuming with angry impatience. He could not leave his horses, or he would have gone after the truants, and no passers-by came along whom he could ask to hold his restive team.

So he continued to shout, and Dick and Dolly continued to assure him that they were coming, but they didn’t come.

At last they appeared at the thicket hedge, and as the two laughing faces peeped through, Michael could scarcely recognise his young charges. Torn, soiled, dishevelled, unkempt, there was absolutely no trace of the spick and span toilets Mrs. Halkett had looked after so carefully, in spite of her aching head and tired nerves.

“Yez naughty little rascals!” cried Michael. “Whatever possessed yez to tousel yersilves up loike that! Shame to yez! What’ll yer aunties say?”

For the first time, the twins realised their disreputable appearance.

What, indeed, would their new aunties say to them? Aunt Helen would have laughed, in her pretty, merry way, and sent them trotting away to clean up, but with new and untried aunties they couldn’t be sure. Moreover, they had an idea that Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie were not at all like pretty, young Auntie Helen.

Rescuing her hat from the thorn bush where it hung, Dolly looked ruefully at its twisted flowers. The more she tried to pull them into shape, the worse they looked.

She put it on her head, dismayed meanwhile to find her broad hair-ribbon was gone, and her

sunny curls a moist, tangled mop.

Dick was conscious of a growing feeling of wrong-doing, but there was nothing to be done but face the music.

“Get in,” he said, briefly to his sister, and they clambered into the carriage.

Michael said no more; it was not his place to reprimand the children of the house, but he sat up very straight and stiff, as he drove rapidly toward home. To be sure, his straightness and stiffness was to conceal a fit of merriment caused by the thought of presenting these ragamuffins at the portals of Dana Dene, but the ragamuffins themselves didn’t know that, and regretful and chagrined, they sat hand in hand, awaiting their fate.

CHAPTER II

THE ARRIVAL

In the dark and somewhat sombre library at Dana Dene, Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie sat awaiting their guests. The room might have been called gloomy, but for the sunshine that edged in through the long, narrow, slit-like windows, and made determined golden bars across the dark-red carpet. Both the Misses Dana showed clearly their anxiety to have the children arrive and end their suspense.

"If only they're tidy children," said Miss Rachel for the fiftieth time; and Miss Abbie responded, as she always did, "Yes, and quiet-mannered."

Miss Rachel Dana was of rather spare build, and sharp features. Her brown hair, only slightly tinged with grey, was deftly arranged, and every curled lock in its right place. Her pretty house-dress of dark blue foulard silk, with white figures, was modishly made and carefully fitted.

Miss Abbie was a little more plump, and her gown was of a shade lighter blue, though otherwise much like her sister's.

The ladies had a patient air, as if they had waited long, but though they now and then glanced at the clock, they expressed no surprise at the delayed arrival. Trains were apt to be late at Heatherton, and they knew Michael would return as soon as possible. They had not gone themselves to the station to meet the twins, for it had seemed to them more dignified and fitting to receive their young relatives in their own home. Meantime, the young relatives were drawing nearer, and now, quite forgetting their own untidy appearance, their thoughts had turned to the waiting aunts, and the welcome they would probably receive.

"I don't believe they'll be as nice as Aunt Helen," said Dick, candidly, "but I hope they'll be jolly and gay."

"I hope they'll like us," said Dolly, a little wistfully. She had always missed a mother's love more than Dick had, and her affectionate little heart hoped to find in these aunties a certain tenderness that merry Aunt Helen had not possessed.

Dick eyed his sister critically. "I don't believe they will," he said, honestly, "until we get some clean clothes on. I say, Dollums, we look like scarecrows."

"So we do!" said Dolly, fairly aghast as she realised the state of her costume. "Oh, Dick, can't we get dressed up before we see them?"

"Course we can't. Our trunks and bags haven't come yet; and, anyway, they'll probably be on the porch or somewhere, to meet us. Buck up, Dolly; don't you mind. You're just as nice that way."

"Is my face dirty?"

"Not so much dirty,—as red and scratched. How *did* you get so chopped up?"

"It was those briars. You went over, but I went through."

"I should say you did! Well, I don't believe they'll mind your looks. And, anyway, they'll have to get used to it; you 'most always look like that."

This was cold comfort, and Dolly's feminine heart began to feel that their appearance would be greatly in their disfavour.

But she was of a sanguine nature, and, too, she was apt to devise expedients.

"I'll tell you, Dick," she said, as an idea came to her; "you know, 'a soft answer turneth

away wrath'; no,—I guess I mean 'charity covereth a multitude of sins.' Yes, that's it. And charity is love, you know. So when we see the aunties, let's spring into their arms and kiss 'em and love 'em 'most to death, and then they won't notice our clothes."

"All right, that goes. Let me see,—yes, your face is clean,"—Dick made a dab or two at it with his handkerchief. "How's mine?"

"Yes, it's clean," said Dolly, "at least, there aren't any smudges; but you'd better wash it before supper."

"All right, I will. Here we go now, turning in at the gate. Be ready to jump out and fly at them if they're on the porch."

They weren't on the porch, so the twins went in at the great front door, which was opened for them by a smiling maid, whose smile broadened as she saw them. Then, repressing her smile, she ushered them to the library door and into the presence of the two waiting aunts.

"Now!" whispered Dick, and with a mad rush, the two flew across the room like whirlwinds and fairly *banged* themselves into the arms of Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie Dana.

This sudden onslaught was followed by a series of hugs and kisses which were of astonishing strength and duration.

What Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie thought can never be known, for they had no power of thought. Victims of a volcanic visitation do not think,—at least, not coherently, and the Dana ladies were quite helpless, both mentally and physically.

"Dear Auntie," cooed Dolly, patting the cheek of the one she had attacked, though not knowing her name; "are you glad to see us?"

Miss Rachel stared stupidly at her, but the stare was not reassuring, and Dolly's heart fell.

"Jolly glad to get here," cried Dick, loyally trying to carry out Dolly's plan, as he nearly choked the breath out of the other aunt. Miss Abbie had a little more sense of humour than her sister,—though neither of them was over-burdened with it,—so she said to Dick:

"Then do stop pommeling me, and stand off where I can see what you look like!"

But this was just what Dick was not anxious to do. So he only clung closer, and said, "Dear Auntie, which is your name?"

"I'm your Aunt Abbie," was the response, not too gently given, "and now stand up, if you please, and stop these monkey-tricks!"

Of course, since she put it that way, Dick had to desist, and he released his struggling aunt, and bravely stood up for inspection.

Miss Rachel, too, had pushed Dolly away from her, and the twins stood, hand in hand, waiting for the verdict. It was an awful moment. The physical exertion of the manner they had chosen of greeting their aunts had made their flushed little faces still redder, and the scratches stood out in bold relief.

Also, their soiled and torn garments looked worse in this elegantly appointed room even than they had in the woods or in the carriage.

Altogether the twins felt that their plan of defence had failed, and they were crestfallen, shy, homesick, and pretty miserable all 'round.

But the funny part was, that the plan hadn't failed. Though the aunts never admitted it, both their hearts were softened by the feeling of those little arms round their necks, and those vigorous, if grimy kisses that fell, irrespectively, on their cheeks, necks, or lace collars.

Had it not been for this tornado of affection, the greeting would have been far different. But one cannot speak coldly to a guest who shows such warmth of demonstration.

"Well, you *are* a pretty-looking pair!" exclaimed Miss Rachel, veiling her real disapproval

behind a semblance of jocularly. "Do you always travel in ragged, dirty clothes?"

"No, Aunt Rachel," said Dick, feeling he must make a strike for justice; "at least, we don't start out this way. But you see, we had hardly ever seen a brook before——"

"And it was so lovely!" put in Dolly, ecstatically.

"And wild flowers to it!" cried Dick, his eyes shining with the joy of the remembrance.

"And pebbly stones!"

"And ripply water!"

"And birds, flying in big bunches!"

"Oh, but it was splendid!"

"And so you went to the brook," said Aunt Rachel, beginning to see daylight.

"Yes'm; on the way up from the station, you know."

"Did Michael go with you?"

"No; he sat and held the horses, and hollered for us to come back."

"Why didn't you go when he called you?"

"Why, we did; at least, we went in a minute. But, Aunt Rachel, we never had seen a real live brook before, not since we were little bits of kiddy-wids,—and we just couldn't bear to leave it."

"We waded in it!" said Dolly, almost solemnly, as if she had referred to the highest possible earthly bliss.

The Dana ladies were nonplussed. True, the affection showered on them had tempered their severity, yet now justice began to reassert itself, and surely it would not be just or fair to have these semi-barbaric children installed at Dana Dene.

"Did your aunt in Chicago let you act like this?" asked Aunt Abbie, by way of trying to grasp the situation.

"Well, you see, there never was a brook there," said Dick, pleasantly. "Only Lake Michigan, and that was too big to be any fun."

"Oh, isn't Heatherton lovely?" exclaimed Dolly, her big, dark eyes full of rapture.

She had again possessed herself of Miss Rachel's hand and was patting it, and incidentally transferring some "good, brown earth" to it, from her own little paw.

Though Dolly had planned their mode of entrance, she had forgotten all about it now, and her affectionate demonstrations were prompted only by her own loving little heart, and not by an effort to be tactful.

In her enthusiasm over the beautiful country-side, she fairly bubbled over with love and affection for all about her.

"Are you both so fond of the country, then?" said Miss Abbie, a little curiously.

"Yes, we love it," declared Dick, "and we've 'most never seen it. Auntie Helen always liked fashionable places in summer, and of course in winter we were in Chicago."

"And we were naughty," said Dolly, with a sudden burst of contrition, "to go wading in the brook in our good clothes. Mrs. Halkett told us *spressly* not to get soiled or even rumped before we saw you. And we're sorry we did,—but, oh! that brook! When can we go there again? To-morrow?"

"Or this afternoon," said Dick, sidling up to Aunt Rachel; "it isn't late, is it?"

The twins had instinctively discerned that Miss Rachel was the one of whom to ask permission. Aunt Abbie seemed more lovable, perhaps, but without a doubt Aunt Rachel was the fixer of their fate.

"This afternoon! I should say not!" exclaimed Miss Rachel. "It's nearly supper time now,

and how you're going to be made presentable is more than I know! Have you any other clothes?"

"In our trunks,—lots of 'em," said Dick, cheerfully. "But these are our best ones. Mrs. Halkett put them on us purpose to come to you. I'm sorry they're smashed."

Dick's sorrow was expressed in such blithe and nonchalant tones, that Miss Rachel only smiled grimly.

"Are you hungry?" she said.

"No'm," said Dick, slowly, and Dolly added, "Not *very*. Of course we're always *some* hungry. But Aunt Rachel, can't we go out and scoot round the yard? Just to see what it's like, you know. Of course, this room is,—beautiful, but we do love to be out doors. May we?"

"No," said Miss Rachel, decidedly, and though Miss Abbie said, timidly, "Why don't you let them?" the elder sister resumed:

"Go out on my lawn looking like that? Indeed you can't! I'd be ashamed to have the chickens see you,—let alone the servants!"

"Oh, are there chickens?" cried Dolly, dancing about in excitement. "I'm *so* glad we're going to live here!"

She made a movement as if to hug her Aunt Rachel once again, but as she saw the involuntary drawing away of that lady's shoulders, she transferred her caress to Dick, and the tattered twins fell on each other's necks in mutual joy of anticipation.

"You are a ridiculous pair of children," said Aunt Abbie, laughing at the sight; "but as I hope you'll show some of your father's traits, you may improve under our training."

"If we can train such hopeless cases," said Miss Rachel. "Has nobody ever taught you how to behave?"

"Yes," said Dick, growing red at the implication. "Auntie Helen is a lovely lady, and she taught us to be honourable and polite."

"Oh, she did! and do you call it honourable to go off wading in your best clothes, while we were waiting for you to come here?"

Dick's honest little face looked troubled.

"I don't know," he said, truly, but Dolly, who was often the quicker-witted of the two, spoke up:

"It may have been naughty, Aunt Rachel, but I don't 'zackly think it was dishonourable. Do you?" Thus pinned down, Miss Rachel considered.

"Perhaps 'dishonourable' isn't quite the right word," she said, "but we won't discuss that now. I shall teach you to behave properly, of course, but we won't begin until you look like civilised beings, capable of being taught. Just now, I think hot baths, with plenty of soap, will be the best thing for you, but as you have no clean clothes, you'll have to go to bed."

"At five o'clock! Whew!" said Dick. "Oh, I say, Aunt Rachel, not to bed!"

"Anyway, let us go for a tear around the yard first," begged Dolly. "We can't hurt these clothes now; and I don't believe the chickens will mind. Are there *little* chickens, Aunt Abbie?"

"Yes, little woolly yellow ones."

"Like the ones on Easter souvenirs? Oh, *please* let us see them now,—*please*!"

More persuaded by the violence of her niece's plea than by her own inclination, Miss Rachel said they might go out for half an hour, and then they must come in to baths and beds.

"And supper?" asked Dick, hopefully.

"Yes, bread and milk after you're clean and tucked into bed."

“*Only* bread and milk?” said Dolly, with eyes full of wheedlesomeness.

“Well, perhaps jam,” said Aunt Abbie, smiling, and somehow her smile augured even more than jam. Out they scampered then, and soon found Michael, who introduced them to the chickens and also to Pat, who was the gardener.

“I like you,” said Dolly, slipping her little hand into Pat’s big one, both being equally grimy. “Please show us all the flowers and things.”

There was so much to look at, they could only compass a small part of it in their allotted half-hour. Dana Dene covered about thirty acres, but it was not a real farm. A vegetable garden supplied the household wants, and the rest of the estate was park and flower beds and a bit of woods and an orchard and a terrace, and the poultry yard and stables, and other delights of which the children could only guess.

“Aren’t you glad we came?” said Dolly, still hanging on to Pat’s hand.

“I—I guess so, Miss,” he replied, cautiously; “but I can’t say yet, for sure. Ye’re rampageous, I’m afraid. Ain’t ye, now?”

“Yes,” said Dick, who was always honest, “I think we are. At least, everybody says so. But, Pat, we’re going to try not to make you any trouble.”

“Now, that’s a good boy. If ye talk like that, you ’n me’ll be friends.”

Dolly said nothing, but she smiled happily up into Patrick’s kind eyes, and then, with their usual adaptability to circumstances, the twins began to feel at home.

CHAPTER III

AN EARLY STROLL

Soon after daybreak next morning, Dolly woke, and surveyed with satisfaction her pretty room.

Pink roses clambered over the wall paper, and over the chintz hangings and furniture, and over the soft, dainty bed-coverlet.

It was much more attractive than her room at Aunt Helen's, and as Dolly loved pretty things, she gave a little sigh of content and nestled comfortably into her pillows. Then she heard Dick's voice whispering through the closed door between their rooms.

"Hi, Dolly; I say! Aren't you up yet?"

"No, are you?"

"Yes, and 'most dressed. Hustle, can't you? and let's go out and chase around the place."

"Before breakfast?"

"Yes; breakfast isn't until eight o'clock, and it's only six now."

"All right, I'll hustle," and Dolly sprang out of bed, and began to dress.

The twins were a self-reliant pair, and quite capable and methodical when they had time to be.

Dolly dressed herself neatly in a clean blue and white plaid gingham; and as she could tie her hair ribbon quite well enough, except for special occasions, the blue bow on her golden curls was entirely satisfactory.

"I'm all ready, Dick," she whispered at last, through the door, "and we mustn't make any noise, for maybe the aunties are asleep yet."

"All right; I'll meet you in the hall."

So both children went on tiptoe out into the big, light hall, and softly down the stairs.

No one seemed to be stirring, but they unfastened the locks and chains of the front doors, and stepped out into the beautiful fresh morning.

"I've got to holler!" said Dick, still whispering. "They can't hear us now."

"Yes, they can; wait till we get farther away from the house."

So, hand in hand, they ran down the garden path, and when a grape arbour and a cornfield were between them and their sleeping aunts, they decided they were out of hearing.

"Hooray!" yelled Dick, as loud as he could, at the same time turning a jubilant handspring.

Dolly was quite as glad as her brother, but contented herself with dancing about, and giving little squeals of delight as she saw one rapturous sight after another.

"Oh, Dick," she cried, "there's a fountain! 'way over there on the little hill. Do you s'pose that's on our grounds?"

"'Course it is. This is all ours, as far as you can see, and more too. That woodsy place over there is ours; Pat told me so."

"We'll have picnics there. And Dick, maybe there are fairies in the woods."

"Sure there are. That's just the kind of woods that has fairies. But they only come out at night, you know."

"Yes, but it's only just a little past night now. The sun has only been up a short time. Maybe there are some fairies there yet."

"Maybe; let's go and see."

With a skip and a jump the children started for the woods, which, however proved to be farther away than they had thought.

They trudged merrily on, stopping now and then to speak to a robin, or kick at a dandelion, but at last they came to the edge of the grove.

"Oh, Dick!" cried Dolly, in ecstasy, "think of having a real woods, right in our own yard! Isn't it gorgeous!"

"Great! but go softly now, if we want to see fairies. I'm 'fraid they've all gone."

Hand in hand the children tiptoed into the wood. They moved very cautiously, lest they should step on a twig, or make any noise that should frighten the fairies.

"There's where they dance," whispered Dick, pointing to a smooth, green mossy place. "But of course they always fly away when the sun rises."

"Yes, I s'pose so," said Dolly, regretfully. "Shall we come out earlier to-morrow?"

"Yes; or we might come out to see them some night. Moonlight nights; that's the time!"

"Would you dare? Oh, Dick, wouldn't it be grand!"

"Hey, Dolly, there's a squirrel; a real, live one! That's better'n fairies. Oh, look at him!"

Sure enough, a grey squirrel ran past them, and now sat, turning his head back to look at them, but ready for instant flight if they moved.

But they didn't move, they knew better; and scarce daring to breathe, they sat watching the wonderful sight.

Meantime, there was consternation in the household. At seven o'clock Miss Rachel had sent Hannah, the waitress, to call the twins.

The maid returned with a scared face, and announced that the children had gone.

"Gone!" cried Miss Rachel, who was engaged in making her own toilet; "where have they gone?"

"I don't know, ma'am; but they're not in their rooms, and the front door is wide open."

"Oh, they've run away!" cried Miss Rachel, and hastily throwing on a dressing gown, she went to her sister's room.

"Get up, Abbie," she exclaimed. "Those children have run away!"

"Run away? What do you mean?"

"Why, they've gone! I suppose they didn't like us. Perhaps they were homesick, or something. Abbie, do you suppose they've gone back to Chicago, all alone?"

"Nonsense, Rachel, of course they haven't! Children always rise early. They're probably walking in the garden."

"No, I don't think so. Something tells me they've run away because they don't like us. Oh, Abbie, do you think that's it?"

"No, I don't. Go on and dress. They'll be back by the time you're ready for breakfast. If you're worried, send Hannah out to hunt them up."

So Hannah was sent, but as she only looked in the verandas and in the gardens near the house, of course, she didn't find the twins. By the time the ladies came downstairs, Hannah had impressed Pat and Michael into service, and all three were hunting for the missing guests.

But it never occurred to them to go so far as the woods, where Dick and Dolly were even then sitting, watching the grey squirrel, and looking for fairies.

"I'm thinkin' they've fell in the pond," said Pat, as he gazed anxiously into the rather muddy water.

"Not thim!" said Michael; "they're not the sort that do be afther drownin' thimselves. They're too frisky. Belikes they've run back to the brook where they shtopped at yisterday. Do

yez go there an' look, Pat."

"Yes, do," said Miss Rachel, who, with clasped hands and a white face was pacing the veranda.

"Don't take it so hard, sister," implored Miss Abbie. "They're around somewhere, I'm sure; and if not,—why, you know, Rachel, you didn't want them here very much, anyway."

"How can you be so heartless!" cried Miss Rachel, her eyes staring reproachfully at her sister. "I do want them; they're brother's children, and this is their rightful home. But I wish they wanted to stay. I'm sure they ran away because they didn't like us. Do you think we were too harsh with them yesterday?"

"Perhaps so. At any rate, they *have* run away. I thought they were in the garden, but if so, they would have been found by now. Do you suppose they took an early train back to New York?"

"Oh, Abbie, how *can* you say so! Those two dear little mites alone in a great city! I can't think it!"

"It's better than thinking they are drowned in the pond."

"Either is awful; and yet of course some such thing must have happened."

The two ladies were on the verge of hysterics, and the servants, who had all been hunting for the children, were nonplussed. Pat had jumped on a horse, and galloped off to the brook which had so taken their fancy the day before, and Michael stood, with his hands in his pockets, wondering if he ought to drag the pond. Delia, the cook, had left the waiting breakfast and had come to join the anxious household.

"I'm thinkin' they're not far off," she said; "why don't ye blow a horn, now?"

"That's a good idea," said Miss Abbie; "try it, Michael."

So Michael found an old dinner-horn that had hung unused in the barn for many years, and he blew resounding blasts.

But unfortunately, the babes in the woods were too far away to hear, and forgetful of all else they watched two squirrels, who, reassured by the children's quiet, ran back and forth, and almost came right up to Dick and Dolly's beckoning fingers.

"If only we had something to feed them," said Dick, vainly hunting his pockets for something edible.

"If only we had something to feed ourselves," said Dolly; "I'm just about starved."

"So'm I; let's go back now, and come to see the squirrels some other time, and bring them some nuts."

"All right, let's."

So back they started, but leisurely, for they had no thought of how the time had slipped by. They paused here and there to investigate many things, and it was well on toward nine o'clock when they came within hearing of Michael's horn, on which he was blowing a last, despairing blast.

"Hear the horn!" cried Dick. "Do you s'pose that's the way they call the family to breakfast?"

"Oh, it isn't breakfast time, yet," said Dolly, confidently. "I'm hungry enough, but it can't be eight o'clock, I know. And, besides, I want time to tidy up."

The clean frock had lost its freshness, and the blue bow was sadly askew, for somehow, try as she would, Dolly never could keep herself spick and span.

They trudged along, through the barnyard and the garden, and finally came to the kitchen door, which stood invitingly open.

"Let's go in this way," said Dolly; "it's nearer, and I can skin up to my room and brush my hair. I don't want Auntie Rachel to think I'm always messy."

In at the back door they went, and as the kitchen was deserted, they looked around in some surprise.

"Might as well catch a bun," said Dick, seeing a panful of rolls in the warming oven.

The hungry children each took a roll, and then sped on up to their rooms, intent on tidying themselves for breakfast.

"For goodness' sake, Dolly!" exclaimed Dick's voice through the door, "it's after nine o'clock! Do you s'pose they've had breakfast, and where is everybody?"

"After nine o'clock!" said Dolly, opening the door, to make sure she had heard aright. "Well, if this isn't the queerest house! Hurry up, Dick, and brush your hair, and we'll go down and see what's the matter. I know they haven't had breakfast, for the kitchen range was all full of cereals and things."

A few moments later, two neat and well-brushed children tripped gaily downstairs. They went into the library, where their two aunts, nearly in a state of collapse, were reposing in armchairs.

"Good-morning, aunties," said the twins, blithely. "Are we late?"

Miss Abbie gasped and closed her eyes, at the astonishing sight, but Miss Rachel, who was of a different nature, felt all her anxiety turn to exasperation, and she said, sternly:

"You naughty children! Where have you been?"

"Why, we just got up early, and went to look around the place," volunteered Dolly, "and we didn't know it got late so soon."

"But where were you? We've searched the place over."

"We went to the woods," said Dick. "You see, Aunt Abbie, I felt as if I must screech a little, and we thought if we stayed too near the house, we might wake you up. It was awful early then. I don't see how nine o'clock came so soon! Did we keep breakfast back? I'm sorry."

"Why did you want to screech?" said Miss Abbie, quickly. "Are you homesick?"

"Oh, no! I mean screech for joy. Just shout, you know, for fun, and jump around, and turn somersaults. I always do those things when I'm glad. But as it turned out, we couldn't, very much, for we were watching for fairies, and then for squirrels, so we had to be quiet after all."

"And so you wanted to shout for joy, did you?" asked Aunt Rachel, much mollified at the compliments they paid so unconsciously.

"Oh, yes'm! Everything is so beautiful, and so—so sort of enchanted."

"Enchanted?"

"Yes; full of fairies, and sprites. The woods, you know, and the pond, and the fountain,—oh, Dana Dene is the finest place I ever saw!"

Dick's enthusiasm was so unfeigned, and his little face shone with such intense happiness, that Miss Rachel hadn't the heart to scold him after all. So, resolving to tell the twins later of the trouble they had caused, she went away to tell Delia to send in breakfast, and to tell Michael to go and find Patrick, for the twins had returned.



“OH, HOW GOOD THE COOL RIPPY WATER DID FEEL!” (Page [10](#))

“You see,” explained Dolly, as they sat at breakfast, “we went out of the house at half-past seven, by the big, hall clock. And I thought then we’d stay an hour, and get back in time to fix up before we saw you. We’re not very good at keeping clean.”

“So I see,” said Aunt Abbie, glancing at several grass stains and a zigzag tear that disfigured Dolly’s frock.

“Yes’m; so we ’most always try to get in to meals ahead of time, and that ’lows us to spruce up some.”

"We try to," said Dick, honestly, "but we don't always do it."

"No," returned Dolly, calmly; "'most never. But isn't it 'stonishing how fast the time goes when you think there's plenty?"

"It is," said Aunt Rachel, a little grimly. "And now that you're to live here, you'll have to mend your ways, about being late, for I won't have tardiness in my house."

"All right," said Dolly, cheerfully; "I'll hunt up my watch. It doesn't go very well, except when it lies on its face; but if I put it in my pocket upside down, maybe it'll go."

"It must be a valuable watch," remarked Aunt Abbie.

"Yes'm, it is. Auntie Helen gave it to me for a good-by gift, but I looked at it so often, that I thought it would be handier to wear it hanging outside, like a locket, you know. Well, I did, and then it banged into everything I met. And the chain caught on everything, and the watch got dented, and the crystal broke, and one hand came off. But it was the long hand, so as long as the hour hand goes all right, I can guess at the time pretty good. If I'd just had it with me this morning, we'd been all right. I'm real sorry we were late."

Aunt Rachel smiled, but it was rather a grim smile.

"I don't set much store by people who are sorry," she said; "what I like, are people who don't do wrong things the second time. If you are never late to breakfast again, that will please me more than being sorry for this morning's escapade."

"I'll do both," said Dolly, generously, and indeed, the twins soon learned to be prompt at meals, which is a habit easily acquired, if one wishes to acquire it.

CHAPTER IV

GARDENS

“Now, children,” said Aunt Rachel, as they all went into the library, after breakfast, “you may play around as you choose, but I don’t want you to go off the premises without permission. No more wading in the brook, and coming home looking disreputable. You may go to our wood, or anywhere on the place, and stay as long as you like, provided you are here and properly tidy at meal-times. But outside the gates, without permission, you must not go: Can I trust you?”

“Yes, indeed, Aunt Rachel,” said Dick; “I’m sure we don’t want to go anywhere else, with all this beautiful place to play in. Why, we haven’t half explored it yet. Pat says there are thirty acres! Think of that!”

“Yes, it’s a fine old place,” said Miss Rachel, with justifiable pride in her ancestral home. “And I’m glad to have you young people in it, if you’ll only behave yourselves, and not keep us everlastingly in hot water.”

“We do want to be good, Auntie,” said Dolly, in her sweet way; “and if we’re bad a few times, just till we learn your ways, you know, you’ll forgive us, won’t you?”

Pretty little Dolly had a wheedlesome voice, and a winning smile, and Miss Rachel found it difficult to speak sternly, when the big, dark eyes looked into her face so lovingly.

“Yes, I’m sure you want to be good, my dears, and also, we want to do the right thing by you. So we’ll learn each other’s ways, and I’m sure we’ll get along beautifully.”

Miss Rachel was not used to children, and she talked to them as if they were as grown-up as herself, but Dick and Dolly understood, and sat patiently while she talked, though, in truth, they were impatient to get away, and run outdoors again.

“I shall send you to school,” went on Miss Rachel, “but not for a week or two yet. I want to learn you myself a little better first.”

“Yes’m,” said Dolly, who was equally well pleased to go to school or to stay at home. But Dick wanted to go.

“Let us go pretty soon, won’t you, Auntie?” he said; “for I want to get acquainted with the Heatherton fellows.”

“Boys, Dick,” corrected Aunt Abbie, who was beginning to think the twins rather careless of their diction.

“Yes’m, I mean boys. Are there any who live near here?”

Miss Rachel pursed her lips together.

“The Middletons live in the place next to this,” she began, and Dolly broke in:

“Oh, that pretty place, with the stone pillars at the gate?”

“Yes,” went on her aunt. “But Mrs. Middleton and we are not—that is—”

“Oh, you’re not good friends, is that it?” volunteered Dick.

“Well, yes; I suppose that is it. You children are too young to understand, but let it be enough for you that I prefer you should not play with the little Middletons. There are other neighbours equally pleasant for your acquaintance.”

“All right, Auntie,” agreed Dick. “Cut out the Middletons. And now mayn’t we run out to play?”

“First, I’ll take you up and show you your playroom. It’s more for rainy days, as you seem

to like to be out of doors in fine weather. But come and see it, anyway.”

The two aunts led the way, and the children followed to a large, delightful room in the third story.

There was a big table in the middle, and smaller tables and chairs about. There was a pleasant little writing-desk for each, well furnished with pretty writing materials. Low bookshelves ran round two sides of the room, and the other side showed a jolly big fireplace, and pleasant windows with deep seats.

A roomy, comfortable old sofa and a chest of drawers completed the furnishing.

“It isn’t finished,” said Miss Abbie, “because we don’t yet know your tastes.”

“It’s lovely, Aunties!” cried Dolly, flinging her arms round the neck of one after the other, and finally embracing Dick in her enthusiasm.

“Oh, it’s just gay!” Dick cried. “I’ve always wanted a big playroom, and now we’ve got one. Can I whittle and jigsaw up here?”

“Yes, you may do just exactly as you please. You may bring your young friends up here, and entertain them whenever you choose.”

“That is, after we get the friends,” supplemented Dolly.

“Yes, but you’ll soon get acquainted. There are many nice children in Heatherton. Do you play dolls, Dolly?”

“Yes, I do, when I have any little girls to play with. But, you see, I play with Dick so much, I get out of the habit of dolls. But I do love ’em. When our big box of things comes, I’ve lots of dolls in it, and Dick’s tool-chest and jigsaw—oh, it will be splendid to fix them all up here!”

“Yes, Michael will help you. He’ll fix a good workbench, for you, Dick, if you’re fond of fussing with tools. Do you cut your fingers much?”

“Sometimes, Aunt Rachel, but not always. Say, you’re awful good to us. We’re ever so much obliged.”

Dick was more awkward at expressing his appreciation than Dolly, but the honest joy on the boy’s face showed his admiration of the room, and Aunt Rachel’s heart warmed toward him, for she too was sometimes unable to express herself aptly.

“Now we’ll skiddoo,” said Dolly, as she patted Miss Abbie’s hand by way of farewell. “We want to see Pat feed the chickens.”

“Yes, dearie, run along, but,—would you mind if I ask you not to use those—those unusual words?”

“Skiddoo? Oh, that’s an awful useful word, Aunt Abbie. I don’t see how I could get along without it, but I’ll try if you say so.”

“Yes, do try, Dolly; I want my niece to be a refined, ladylike little girl, not a slangy one.”

“Yes’m,” Dolly drew a little sigh. “I want to do what you want me to do. But I’m pretty forgetful, Aunt Abbie, so don’t be ’scouraged, will you, if I don’t get good all at once?”

Dolly had a childish trick of omitting the first syllable of a word, but Aunt Abbie kissed the earnest little face, and assured her that she wouldn’t get ’scouraged.

So away the twins scampered, down the stairs, and out into the sweet, clear morning air.

Dana Dene stood high on an elevation that looked down on the small town of Heatherton. The view from the terrace in front of the house was beautiful, and as Dick and Dolly looked down at the clustered buildings they tried to guess what they were.

“That’s the church,” said Dick, triumphantly pointing to an unmistakable spire.

“One of ’em,” corrected Dolly; “there’s another, and I wonder what that big stone building is; prob’ly the school where we’ll go.”

"P'raps. Is it, Patrick?"

"Well, no, Master Dick; that isn't exactly the school fer ye children. That's the jail,—the county jail, so it is."

"Oh," cried Dolly, in dismay; "I don't want to go to school to a jail! Where is the school-house, Patrick?"

"There's three of 'em, Miss Dolly. But the grandest is that white house ferninst, an' I'm thinkin' ye'll go there."

"Are my aunts very grand, Patrick?"

"Oh, yes, miss. We're the quality of the hull place. There's nobody like the Danas."

"That's nice," said Dolly, with a little air of satisfaction.

"Huh," said Dick; "what sort of a country do you think this is, Dolly? Everybody is as good as everybody else. Why do you talk that way, Pat?"

"Well, sor, it may be. But everybody in Heatherton, they thinks Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie is top o' the heap, you see."

"All right," returned Dick. "I don't mind if we are. But what about the Middletons? Aren't they nice people?"

Pat's face clouded. "Don't be askin' me about the Middletons," he said; "I've nothin' to say for or agin 'em. Now, if so be's you want to see them chickens, come ahead."

They went ahead or, rather, they followed Pat to the chicken yard, and spent a blissful half-hour among the feathered wonders.

They learned the names of the various kinds of chickens, and Dolly declared she should never tire of watching the little yellow fledglings patter around and peep.

"They're not still a minute," she said. "Can I try to catch one?"

Pat showed her how to lift one gently, without hurting the little soft ball of down, and as it was such a pretty little yellow one, Dolly named it Buttercup, and Pat said it should always be her own chicken.

Then Dick picked one out for his very own, and he chose a black one, and called it Cherry, because, he said, some cherries are black.

This made Pat laugh, and then he told the twins to run away and play by themselves, as he had to go to work in earnest.

"What's your work, Pat?" asked Dolly, who liked to stay with the good-natured Irishman.

"I have to do the gardens, Miss Dolly. An' it's rale work, it is, not play. So do ye run away, now."

"Oh, Pat, let us see you garden," begged Dolly.

"Please do," said Dick. "We never saw anybody garden in our life."

"Ye didn't! Fer the love of green corn, where was ye brung up?"

"In the city; and summers we had to go to hotels, and we never even saw a garden dug."

"Come on, then; but ye mustn't bother."

"No, we won't bother," and with a hop, skip, and jump, they followed Pat to the toolhouse. There was such an array of spades, hoes, rakes, and other implements, that Dick cried out: "Oh, let us garden, too! Pat, can't we each have a little garden,—just a square patch, you know, and plant things in it?"

"Arrah, a garden, is it? An' who'd be afther weedin' it, an' keepin' it in order fer ye?"

"Why, we'd do it ourselves," declared Dolly, fixing her eyes on Pat with her most coaxing smile. "Do let us, Pat, dear."

"Well, ye must ask yer aunties. I cudden't give no such permission of myself."

Away flew the twins to the house, in search of the aunties, and when the twins ran, it was a swift performance indeed. They held hands, and their feet flew up and down so fast that they looked like some queer sort of windmill rolling along.

Bang! in at the front door they went, and almost upset Miss Rachel, who was serenely crossing the hall.

“Oh, Auntie, may we have a garden?” shouted Dick, seizing his aunt’s hand, and leaning up against her to steady himself after his exhausting run.

“Oh, Auntie, may we? Do say yes,” cried Dolly, who had flung her arms round Miss Rachel’s waist, and who was dancing up and down to the imminent danger of the good lady’s toes.

“What? Oh, my, how you do fluster me! What is it?”

Miss Rachel shook off the two, and seated herself in a hall chair, to regain her equilibrium, both physical and mental, but the twins made another wild dash at her. “Please,” they coaxed, patting her arm and her face and occasionally each other’s hands in their excitement. “Please, Auntie, a garden for our very own.”

“Two,—one for each of us. May we? Oh, please say yes! Do, Auntie, do, say yes.”

Miss Rachel found her voice at last.

“If you want anything,” she said, “stop jumping around like a pair of wild savages. Sit down on that settee, and tell me quietly, and one at a time, what it’s all about.”

“Let me tell, Dick,” said Dolly, and knowing his sister’s talent for persuasion, Dick willingly kept quiet while Dolly told.

They sat side by side on the hall settee, opposite their aunt, and scarcely dared move, while Dolly made her plea.

“You see, Auntie,” she began, “we’ve never had a garden; never even seen one made. And so, we thought, perhaps, maybe, as there’s so much spare ground lying around, we hoped maybe you’d let us each have a little garden of our own. Just a little tiny one, you know.”

“For pity’s sake,” exclaimed Miss Rachel, “is all this fuss about a garden? Why, you can have a dozen, if you like.”

“Oh, thank you, Auntie,” cried Dolly, repressing her inclination to fly over and hug her aunt, lest it be considered a “fuss.” “One’s enough,—one apiece, I mean. And what can we plant?”

“Why, plant anything you choose. Pat will give you seeds, and if he hasn’t what you want, we’ll buy some when we go driving this afternoon.”

Dick was overcome by his aunt’s kindness and whole-souled generosity. But he had no intention of making a fuss,—not he. He rose and quietly crossed the hall, and bowing low in front of the lady, said:

“Aunt Rachel, I do think you’re the very best person in the whole world!”

“So do I!” said Dolly. “Seems ’s if I *must* squeeze you!”

“Not now,” said Miss Rachel, smiling; “you nearly squeezed the breath out of me a few moments ago. I’ll take your enthusiasm for granted. Now, run out, and make your gardens. Tell Pat I said you’re to have whatever you want for them.”

“Hurray! Hooroo!” cried Dick, unable to repress himself longer, and throwing his cap up in the air, without having had the least intention of doing so.

It landed on the high chandelier, and Hannah had to bring the long-handled feather duster to get it down.

“Please ’scuse Dick, Aunt Rachel,” said loyal little Dolly, seeing her brother’s regretful look.

“He didn’t mean to fling that cap till he got outdoors, but somehow——”

“Somehow, it flung itself,” cried Dick; “‘cause I’m so glad about the garden!”

Away they went, banging the door behind them, and Miss Rachel sat a few minutes, seriously considering whether or not she could keep such little cyclones in her hitherto quiet and well-ordered home.

“It isn’t so much what they’ve done,” she said, as she went and talked it over with Miss Abbie, “as what they may do. They’re liable to fling caps anywhere, and break all the bric-à-brac, and bang all the furniture—well, if there were any place to send them, they should go to-day.”

“You don’t mean that, Rachel,” said Miss Abbie. “They are noisy, I know, but I think we can train them to better manners; and they have dear, loving little hearts.”

“Too loving,” said the elder sister, ruefully. “They nearly felled me to the floor, the way they rushed at me. I’m not over the shock yet!”

“Well,” sighed Miss Abbie, “I suppose it’s because we’re not used to children; but they do seem especially sudden in their ways.”

CHAPTER V

A PLAYGROUND

“Sudden in their ways,” just described Dick and Dolly. After getting their aunt’s sanction, they flew back to the toolhouse, and tumbling in at the door, nearly upset Pat by their sudden dash for spades and hoes.

“She says we can!” cried Dolly; “how do you begin, Pat? What do we do first?”

“Dig, of course,” declared Dick, seizing the biggest spade he could find.

“All right; where shall we dig?”

Dolly grabbed another spade, and skipping out of the toolhouse, began to dig frantically in the path that led from the doorstep.

“Whisht! now! Miss Dolly, don’t be fer sp’ilin’ me good path!”

Pat was amiable, but the vigorous enthusiasm of these children began to appal him. He was always deferential to his employers, and he looked upon the twins as members of his employers’ family, and so he considered himself under their orders. But he also began to see that he must direct matters himself, if these impetuous youngsters were to have a real garden.

“Well,” he said, “if so be’s yer aunts has give permission, we must make the gardens fer ye. But we must do ’t dacint an’ proper. Don’t begin by diggin’ up me tidy paths.”

“I won’t, Pat; I’m sorry!” and Dolly carefully smoothed away the clefts she had dug with her spade.

“Now, we’ll consider,” said Pat, greatly interested in the plan. “First of all, where will ye be selectin’ the place?”

The twins gazed around, at the various gardens, terrace, woodland, and water, and then Dolly said, decidedly:

“In the woods; that’s the prettiest place.”

“Oh, ho!” laughed Pat. “Why, little miss, ye can’t grow things in the woods! Leastwise, only ferns an’ moss! Don’t ye want flowers, now?”

“Oh, yes; of course we do! And I forgot they have to have sunshine.”

“Goosie!” cried Dick. “Now, I think a place near the pond would be nice, and then we can fetch water easily,—for I s’pose we have to water our flowers every day, don’t we, Pat?”

“Yes; onless it rains fer ye, which it sometimes do. Now, s’pose ye let me s’lect yer place, an’ then do ye pick out yer own choice o’ flowers.”

“Do,” cried Dolly. “You know so much better than we do where a garden ought to be.”

Pat considered carefully for a few moments, casting his eye thoughtfully toward various parts of the estate.

“Come on,” he said, at last, and the children followed him, as he strode off.

Just beyond the beautifully kept terrace was a stretch of lawn, entirely open to the sunlight, save for a big horse-chestnut tree in one corner.

Here Pat paused, and indicating by a sweep of his arm a section about seventy-five feet square, he said:

“I’m thinkin’, instead of only a garden, by itself, it’d be foine for ye to make yersilves a rale playground.”

Dolly’s quick mind jumped to the possibilities.

“Oh, Pat, a playground, all for ourselves, with our two gardens in it!”

"Yes, miss; and an arbour, and seats, an' a table, an'——"

But he got no further, for Dick and Dolly seized him by either hand, and jumped up and down, fairly shouting with delight.

"Oh, Pat, Pat, I never heard of anything so lovely!"

"How could you think of it? Let's begin at once!"

"But ye must behave!" cried Pat, shaking his hands loose from their grasp, and waiting for them to stop their antics.

"Yes, yes; we'll behave!" said Dolly, suddenly standing stock-still, and looking very demure. "What do we do first, dig?"

"I'm thinkin' yez better dig a whole acre,—an' see if ye can't work off some of yer animile sperrits! Such rampageous bein's I niver saw!"

"We'll be quiet, Pat," said Dick, earnestly; "now let's begin."

"Well, thin,—first, we must plan it, sure. Suppose we drive a shtake here fer wan corner, and thin the big tree will be the opposite corner. Now ye see the size av it."

"Yes," agreed Dolly, "it's a lovely size."

"Thin, supposin' we plan to set out a little low hedge all around the four sides, wid an openin' or two——"

"And an arched gateway!" cried Dolly, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, miss, say an arched gateway or two. An' then, inside ye can have three or four garden-beds,—fer sep'rate plants, ye know,—an' yer arbour, an' whatever else ye like."

"Oh!" said Dolly, sitting plump down on the ground from sheer inability to bear up under these wonderful anticipations.

"Now, what's to do first?" said Dick, eager to get to work.

"Well, first we'll lay out our flower beds. Now I don't s'pose ye know the difference between seeds an' plants, do ye?"

"Oh, yes! Plants grow from seeds."

"Well, av coorse they do. But I don't mean that. Ye see, some flowers ye set out as plants; an' some ye raise from seeds."

"Oh, I think seeds will be most fun," said Dolly: "You just stuff 'em in the ground and then they grow, don't they, Pat?"

"Well, yes, miss; if yer seeds is right, an' yer ground's right, an' if ye stuff 'em in right, an' take care of 'em right, afterward."

"Oh, we can do all that," Dick assured him, grandly, and Pat's eyes twinkled, as he replied:

"Av coorse ye can!"

Then Pat called Michael to help him, and they drove stakes and tied twine to them, until they had the playground distinctly marked out.

"Now, we'll consider yer flower-beds, an' lave the other considerations till later," announced Pat. "Ye see, yer seed-beds must be in the mornin' sun, an' have the shade of an afthernoon. So, wid the big tree ferninst, we can aisy manage that."

"Seeds seem to be pretty particular," observed Dolly.

"They be that, Miss; but so likewise is the plants. Some wants sun an' some wants shade, an' if they don't get what they wants, they jist lies down an' dies!"

Then Pat and Michael selected the best spots, and marked out two oval flower-beds of goodly size, and two straight, narrow seed-beds somewhat smaller.

"Miss Dolly's, we'll say, will be on this side, an' Master Dick's on that. Now, if so be's ye childhern wants to dig, fer mercy's sake dig! Ye can't hurt the ground."

Pat well knew that his own strong arms would spade up the beds later, and he would fill them with the right sort of soil, and get them in perfect order for planting; but the twins were delighted at the idea of doing their own digging, and went to work with their usual enthusiasm.

It was hard work, but they enjoyed it, and though not very scientifically done, they did manage to dislodge the soft turf, and riddle up the dirt beneath.

"I s'pose it won't be such hard work after the digging is dug," said Dolly, looking at her blistered little palms.

"Why, Dolly Dana!" exclaimed Aunt Abbie, who came out just then, to see how the gardens progressed; "don't you dig another bit! You poor, dear child, your hands are in a dreadful state! Go in and ask Aunt Rachel for some salve."

"No, indeedy!" declared the valiant Dolly. "I'm going to plant my seeds now!"

"Oh, no, miss," said Pat. "Them beds isn't ready yet. Nor ye haven't got yer seeds."

"Don't be too impetuous, Dolly," said Aunt Abbie. "This afternoon, we'll plan out what is best to plant and then by to-morrow, if Patrick has the beds ready, you can do your planting."

Dick was still digging away, manfully, quite unwilling to admit there were blisters on his own hands.

But Aunt Abbie made him stop, for though the digging was good fun, there was no use in causing himself needless pain, and Patrick would do the beds all over, anyway. So Aunt Abbie persuaded the children to turn their attention to planning their playground.

She quite approved of Pat's suggestions, and sent for Miss Rachel to come out and assist with the plans.

Both ladies were very fond of gardening, and entered enthusiastically into the idea of the pretty playground. Miss Rachel instructed Pat to buy and set out a low hedge of privet all round the inclosure; and they decided on two entrances, front and back, each to be adorned by an arch covered with a flowering vine.

An arbour was planned for the centre, but Dolly chose to call it a playhouse. For it was to be big enough to have seats and a table inside.

It was to be built tent-shape; that is, very long, slender poles would be set up in pairs, meeting at the top, like the letter A. There would be about a dozen pairs of these poles, each pair about two feet apart, and thus they would have a long arbour on which to train vines and flowers.

A ridge-pole along the top would keep it all firm and steady, and quickly growing vines should be chosen, which would soon cover the whole frame.

Michael, who was clever at carpenter work, volunteered to make a table and benches, and Dick, who was also fond of tools, felt sure he could help.

Aunt Abbie said she would give a garden swing as her contribution to the playground, and Aunt Rachel said she, too, would give something nice, but what it would be, was a secret as yet.

Then it was nearly dinner-time, so they went back to the house, and the four sorry-looking little hands were carefully washed and anointed with a soothing lotion.

Heatherton people approved of midday dinners, and so the hungry children sat down to an ample and satisfying meal, to which they were fully prepared to do justice.

"You know," said Aunt Rachel, as they chatted at table, "you are to take care of these gardens yourselves. Pat and Michael have all they can do, already; and though they have helpers in the busy seasons, I expect you two to weed and water your own flower-beds."

"Of course, Auntie," said Dolly; "that's what we want to do."

"Else they wouldn't be ours," chimed in Dick. "There are lots of flower-beds around the place, but these are to be our very own. And how can they be, if we don't do all the work on 'em?"

"That's right," said Aunt Rachel, approvingly. "Patrick will superintend your work, and he or Michael will keep the grass and the paths in order, but the rest is for you to do. Do you know anything about flowers?"

"Not a thing!" declared Dolly. "But I want to raise violets and carnation pinks."

"That proves you don't know much," said Aunt Abbie, laughing. "Why, those are the very things you couldn't possibly raise!"

"Why?" said Dolly, looking surprised.

"Because they are too difficult. They require hothouses, or, at least cold frames. You must content yourself with simpler blossoms; nasturtiums, phlox, asters, peonies——"

"Oh, those are just as good," said Dolly. "I don't care much what flowers they are, if they'll grow."

"I like big plants," said Dick. "Could I have sunflowers and hollyhocks, Aunt Rachel?"

"Yes, my boy; I'm sure you can manage those. Have a hedge at the back of your playground of those flowers, and also cosmos and goldenglow."

After dinner they went to the library, and made lists of the flowers they would have. Aunt Abbie drew diagrams of their gardens, and advised the right kinds of flowers to grow together.

"I want you to grow up to love gardening," said Miss Rachel, "but as you are now quite young, and very ignorant on the subject, you must begin with the simplest and easiest sorts of plants."

Then the aunts explained how the children must plant seeds in their seed-beds, and after the tiny shoots sprang up, how they must be separated and thinned out.

"And throw away some of them!" exclaimed Dolly in dismay.

"Yes; that's to make the others stronger and healthier plants."

"What do we plant in our big gardens?" asked Dick.

"Well, there you can have such plants as you want. Roses, geraniums, and Canterbury Bells are good ones. And then, you transplant to those beds your seedlings that you have already started yourselves."

"And can't we plant any seeds in the flower beds?"

"Oh, yes; such as do not need transplanting. You can have borders of portulacca, candytuft, sweet alyssum, and such things."

"My! it sounds grand!" said Dolly, to whom nearly all these names were new.

"Now suppose we go out there again," said Aunt Rachel, "and see what seeds Pat has on hand. Then we'll know what to buy for you."

So back went the quartette, and found the playground had assumed quite a definite air.

A narrow strip of upturned earth showed the line of the hedge that was to be set out. The flower-beds and seed-beds were neatly cut in shape and properly spaded. Little stakes marked the places for the arbor poles, and white cords outlined paths that were yet to be cut.

"It doesn't seem possible it's ours!" said Dolly, drawing a blissful sigh of contentment.

"Now here's some seeds as I already have," said Pat, offering a box of packets to the children.

"Oh, can we plant some now,—right away?" asked Dick.

"Yes; let us do so," said Aunt Abbie, who was nearly as eager as the children to get the garden started.

So they selected nasturtiums, poppies, marigolds, and morning glories from Pat's box, and all went to work at the planting.

The aunts showed Dick and Dolly how to poke a little hole in the ground, about three inches deep, and then drop in a nasturtium seed. Then they covered it over with dirt, pressed it down lightly, and watered it.

This was an enthralling occupation, and the children worked carefully and did just as they were told. Poppies came next, and these seeds were planted quite differently. The ground was made quite smooth, and then slightly watered. Then Pat showed them how to sprinkle the fine seed scantily over the top of the ground, and not put any dirt over it at all. A thin layer of cut grass was scattered over them to keep the seeds from too much sunlight.

"How do you know that some seeds must be planted one way and some another?" asked Dick, looking at Patrick with a new interest.

"That's me business, Masther Dick. We all has to know our business av coorse."

The morning-glory seeds could not be planted just then, as they had to soak in water for two hours, so next they set out some pansy plants. These Pat had expected to use elsewhere, but at Miss Rachel's direction, he handed them over to the twins.

This was a new sort of work, and even more fascinating than seed-planting. The tiny plants were fragile and had to be handled very carefully. Then a hole must be dug with a trowel, the plant set in, and the soil gently filled in about it.

The twins each had a half-dozen pansy plants, and Dick set his in a group, but Dolly arranged hers in a border. Then Miss Rachel said they had done enough for one day, and she marched them off to the house to get rested.

But did Dick and Dolly rest? Not they! They didn't seem to know what the word meant. They went up to their playroom, and sitting together at the table, they drew diagrams and plans for their playground until the aunties called them downstairs again.

CHAPTER VI

A SOCIAL CALL

The twins gladly obeyed their aunts' summons, for it meant to get ready to go to town to buy their flower seeds. Long before the ladies were ready, Dick and Dolly, in trim attire, and with pretty spring coats and hats, sat in the library waiting.

"I like this home a lot, don't you, Dollums?" said Dick, as he thoughtfully looked about him.

"Love it!" responded his twin promptly. "Chicago was nice, too, and Auntie Helen was gay and pretty, but this is so country and all. And oh, Dick, won't our playground be splendiferous! Do you s'pose the arbor will *ever* get built and grown over with flowers and things?"

"Course it will! And, Dolly, I'm going to make some rustic seats and things myself. It tells how in my 'Handy Book,' and I'm sure I can do it."

"I'm sure you can too. And can't you make some little seats for my dolls?"

Dick had just agreed to do this when the two aunties came downstairs, and they all went out to the carriage. Somehow it seemed very formal. Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie, all dressed up in calling costume, with gloves and parasols, didn't seem so chummy as when they were all out planting seeds together. And Michael, in his coachman's livery, looked so straight and unintelligent that it was hard to believe he was the same man.

They all got into the big, open carriage, and the twins sat backward, facing their aunts.

"First," said Miss Rachel, who sat up very stiff and prim, "we will go and buy the seeds and plants, and then we will pay some calls."

This seemed very strange to Dick and Dolly, for they had never been taken calling with Auntie Helen in Chicago; but they made no comment, as none seemed to be expected.

The carriage stopped at a small shop, and the proprietor hurried out to greet the ladies. He bowed with great deference, and asked what he might show them.

Miss Rachel had a list of the seeds and plants they had decided on for the children's gardens, and the shopman said he would send them all the next day.

"And have you some small garden implements?" asked Miss Abbie. "Some little rakes and hoes, suitable for children's use."

The shopman said he would bring some out to show them.

"Oh, Auntie," cried Dolly, impulsively, "can't we go in the shop and look at them?"

"No, indeed," said Miss Rachel, as if Dolly had asked something highly improper. "Stay where you are and make your selections."

Dolly wondered why they couldn't hop out, but it didn't much matter, as the man returned, followed by a youth who brought a lot of spades and rakes and garden tools of many sorts.

The children were allowed to select all they wanted, and, guided by Aunt Rachel's advice, they chose quite a great many.

"You're awful good to us," exclaimed Dick as, after giving the order, they drove away.

"Then you must be good to us," said Aunt Rachel, smiling. "Now we are going to call at Mrs. Fuller's. She has a son Jack, about ten years old, and I hope you will be good friends with him. There are no little girls here, but, Dolly, we will find some girl friends for you later on."

"Oh, I like boys," said Dolly, agreeably. "I like Dick better than any girl, so, of course, I like other boys too."

At Mrs. Fuller's they were ushered into a stiff, formal-looking parlour, which had the effect

of being rarely used. The half-drawn blinds gave but a dim light, and the four guests took their seats in silence.

Dick and Dolly felt depressed without knowing just why. They secretly wished they could clasp hands and make a dash for the door and run away, but Aunt Rachel had asked them to be good, so they sat still, wondering what would be expected of them.

After what seemed a long time, Mrs. Fuller came into the room. She was a lady of very precise manners, and wore a rustling silk gown.

The ladies all shook hands quite stiffly, and inquired for each other's health, and then Miss Rachel presented the twins to Mrs. Fuller.

"How do you do, my dears?" said the lady, offering her finger-tips to each in turn.

"I'm very well, thank you; how are you?" said Dolly, heartily, as she cordially gave her hostess's hand a vigorous shake. But the chagrin on the Dana ladies' faces, and the surprised glance of Mrs. Fuller, proved at once that this wasn't the right thing to do.

Quick to catch the hint, Dick offered his hand hesitatingly,—so much so indeed, that it lay in Mrs. Fuller's like a little limp fish, and as she finally dropped it, it fell loosely to Dick's side.

"How d' do?" he murmured, uncertain what to say, and then, feeling very uncomfortable, the two children sat down again.

For a time no attention was paid to them, and the ladies conversed in short, elegant sentences, and high-pitched voices.

Then Mrs. Fuller turned again to the twins:

"How do you like Heatherton?" she asked.

The suddenness of the question took Dick unawares, and he said enthusiastically:

"Out o' sight!"

Immediately he realised that he should have expressed himself more formally, and the look of annoyance on Aunt Rachel's face made him red and embarrassed.

Loyal little Dolly tried, as always, to come to his rescue, and she said politely:

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Fuller; we like it awfully well so far, but of course we haven't been here very long yet."

"And you think you won't like it when you've been here longer! Is that it?"

Mrs. Fuller meant only to be jocose, but Dolly didn't understand, and tried hard to explain.

"No 'm; I don't mean that. I mean I think we'll like it better after we live here a while."

"I trust you will," said Mrs. Fuller. "You must be hard to please if you don't."

Poor Dolly felt herself misunderstood, but she could think of nothing to say, so she sat silent, but, it seemed, this was not the right thing to do either.

"Speak up, child," said Aunt Rachel, half playfully and half sharply; "didn't you hear Mrs. Fuller's remark?"

"Yes 'm," said Dolly, "but,—but I don't know what to answer."

"Strange child," murmured Mrs. Fuller. "Is the boy any more civil?"

Dick, though embarrassed himself, was still more annoyed at Dolly's discomfiture, and spoke up decidedly:

"We don't mean to be uncivil, Mrs. Fuller. But we've never made fashionable calls before, and we don't know quite how to talk. It's so different in Chicago."

"Different in Chicago! I should hope so. My dear Miss Dana and Miss Abbie, you'll have your hands full with these little ones, won't you?"

"At first," said Miss Rachel with dignity. "But we hope to teach them."

"And we want to learn," put in Dolly, with an instinctive desire to stand by her aunt against

this disagreeable lady.

"Then there'll be no trouble, I'm sure," said Mrs. Fuller, but though her words were all right, her tone was a little bit sarcastic, and the twins were conscious of a feeling of defeat, which was far from comfortable.

Then Jack Fuller came into the room.

He was a boy of ten, with fair hair, and a pale, girlish face. He, apparently, had impeccable manners, and gave his hand to the Dana ladies with just the right degree of cordiality. Then, being introduced to Dick and Dolly, he came and sat on the sofa between them.

Instinctively, Dick felt that he never could like that boy. Jack had scarcely opened his mouth before Dick had dubbed him a "Miss Nancy." He didn't believe Jack could run or jump, or do anything that a boy ought to do.

"Do you like to live here?" said Jack at last, by way of opening conversation.

"Yes, we do," said Dolly; "we're going to have splendid gardens,—we've been digging all day. Don't you love to do that?"

Jack looked at her with apparent surprise that a girl should care for such vigorous pursuits.

"I never dig," he answered. "Mamma thinks it isn't good for me."

"How funny!" said Dolly. "I should think it would do you good."

"Do you like to run and jump?" asked Dick, for there had been a pause, and he considered it his turn to "make talk."

"Oh, not very much. I like quiet games. I play mostly by myself. Mamma won't let me associate with many children. But I'm to be allowed to play with you. I know that, because you're Danas."

This was gratifying in a way, but somehow Dick wasn't over-enchanted at the prospect.

"I hope you will," he said; "but I'm afraid,—when we're playing, we're rather,—rather rampageous."

"Rough, do you mean?" asked Jack, looking horrified.

"Well, we don't mean to be rough exactly; but we're sort of noisy and lively."

"Well, I shall visit you all the same," said Jack, with a resigned air, "for mamma said I should. I think I'm to go see you to-morrow afternoon at four."

This specified date amused the Dana children, but Dolly said politely:

"That will be very nice, and I'm sure we'll have a good time."

And then the aunties rose to take leave, and they all went home again.

"You children must learn better manners," said Aunt Rachel, as they drove homeward. "You horrified me to-day by your manner of speaking."

"I saw we did," said Dolly, humbly, "but I don't see what we did that was wrong. I'm sure we didn't mean to be bad."

"You weren't bad," said Abbie, smiling at them, "but we want you to acquire a little more grace and elegance. You spoke, in Mrs. Fuller's parlour, just as you would at home."

"Oh," said Dick, "I begin to see; you want us to put on society airs."

Aunt Rachel considered a moment.

"While I shouldn't express it in just that way," she said, "that is about what I mean."

"Well," said Dick pleasantly, "we'll try. But Aunt Helen always taught us to be just as polite when alone at home as when we were visiting or had company."

"Auntie Helen isn't teaching you now," said Miss Rachel, grimly; "and I trust you'll consider my wishes in the matter."

"We will, Aunt Rachel, we truly will," broke in Dolly, whose rôle was often that of pacificator. "You're terribly good to us, and we want to do 'zactly as you want us to, but, you see, fashionable calls are new to us. We'll do better next time."

Dolly's cheerful smile was infectious, and Aunt Rachel smiled back, and dropped the subject of manners for the present.

The next afternoon, promptly at four o'clock, Jack Fuller came to see Dick and Dolly. The twins had been grubbing in their gardens all day, and had been radiantly happy.

They loved flowers and learned quickly the elements of gardening that Pat taught them. And with their new garden tools of suitable size, they did real work after the most approved fashion. But at three o'clock they were called in to get ready for the expected guest. Dick grumbled a little, for it seemed hard to leave the gardens to get all dressed up just because a boy was coming!

"But you want to make friends in Heatherton, don't you?" asked Aunt Rachel.

"Yes 'm; but I like boys who come over and play in every-day clothes; not rig up like a party."

As for Dolly, she didn't see why she had to leave the garden at all. Jack Fuller wasn't her company.

But the aunts decreed that both twins should receive the guest properly, and so at quarter to four, two spick and span, but not very merry children sat in the library, waiting.

Jack came in, at last, and greeted the twins with the same formality he had shown in his own home. He responded politely to the elder ladies' remarks and Dick and Dolly tried to be polite and do exactly as the others did.

After nearly half an hour of this stiff and uncomfortable conversation, Miss Rachel proposed that the twins take Jack out and show him their gardens. Glad to get out of doors, Dick and Dolly ran for their hats and the three children started out.

To the twins' astonishment, as soon as he was out of the presence of the elder ladies, Jack turned into quite a different boy. His formal manner fell away, and he was chummy and full of fun.

"Let's throw stones," he cried. "See me hit that stone bird on the fountain."

He flung a pebble with such true aim that it hit the stone bird on the wing, and roused Dick's exceeding admiration, for he was not himself a superior marksman.

"Want to play knife?" asked Jack, pulling a new knife from his pocket; "or no, let's go see your gardens first. Must be gay ones, from the fuss you make over 'em."

But when he saw the playground that was planned, he was appreciative enough to satisfy the twins' love of enthusiasm.

"It's great!" he cried; "that's what it is, great! I wish I had one like it."

"Yes, won't it be fine!" agreed Dick; "there'll be a table in the arbour, and chairs, or benches, and we can have tea-parties, and everything."

"Plant gourds on your arbour," advised Jack. "All kinds are good, but the dipper and cucumber gourd grow the fastest. They'll cover your arbour in a few weeks, I guess. Hercules club is a good fellow for that, too. Pat'll know about 'em."

Dick and Dolly felt their admiration rising for this boy, who knew so much about climbing gourds and flowers of all sorts. It was strange that he could throw stones so straight, and also have such fine parlour manners. So very strange indeed that Dick felt he must inquire into it.

"Say," he began; "you're awful different out here from what you are in the parlour."

"Sure," returned Jack. "In parlours, with ladies, a fellow has to be polite and proper. You

don't want me to be like that out here with you, do you?"

Jack's face expressed such a willingness to do what was required of him that Dick exclaimed hastily:

"Not on your life! But I don't see how you manage those fine airs when you have to."

"Pooh, it's dead easy. Anyway, I've always done it. Mamma wouldn't like it if I didn't."

"I s'pose we'll have to learn," said Dolly, sighing a little; "but don't let's bother about it now."

As the afternoon wore on, and they became better acquainted, they both began to like Jack very much. He was not a strong boy, and couldn't run or jump as they could, but he was clever at games, and could beat them easily at "knife," or "hop-scotch," or almost any game of muscular skill that did not call for violent exercise.

"He's all right," said Dick to Dolly as they sat on the veranda steps a few minutes after Jack went home. "But I hope we won't always have to dress up, and sit in the parlour at first every time he comes."

"Let's ask Aunt Rachel," said Dolly.

"Why, no," said Miss Rachel in surprise. "Of course you won't. To-day was his first visit, as you called on him yesterday. After this, you can go to play with each other in your everyday clothes, whenever you like."

Dick and Dolly were satisfied with this, and gave up trying to fathom the strange requirements of etiquette at Heatherton.

CHAPTER VII

PINKIE

The days passed happily at Dana Dene.

There was so much to do, with the gardens and the chickens, and going for afternoon drives that, except on rainy days, the children were out of doors nearly all the time.

Their big boxes had arrived, and Dolly's dolls, and Dick's more boyish treasures, were up in the playroom, but were often neglected for open-air fun.

It had been decided by the aunties that the twins should not go to school until Fall, for the term was within a few weeks of closing, and it didn't seem worth while to start. But they were required to practise on the piano an hour each day, and a teacher came once a week to give them lessons. The Misses Dana were fond of music, and as they thought the twins showed some talent, they insisted on its cultivation, though Dick and Dolly looked upon their practice hour as drudgery.

They always practised at the same time, if possible, in order to have their play hours together. If they had been practising duets, this plan might have been fairly agreeable to the other members of the household. But the nine-year-old twins had not yet arrived at the dignity of "pieces," and were confined to scales and five-finger exercises.

Their scales usually started on harmonious notes, but Dolly's little fingers flew along the keyboard so much faster than Dick's that she usually finished her scale on the highest notes, and drummed away there until his chubby hands came up and caught her.

This, though a satisfactory plan to the performers, was far from pleasant to the sensitive ears of the Dana aunties.

Again, in case of five-finger exercises, they divided the piano fairly, and then diligently pursued their "one-and, two-and, three-and" quite irrespective of each other.

As they were careful not to infringe on one another's territory, they saw no objection to this arrangement, and quite in despair, the aunts would close the doors of the drawing-room, where the musicians were, and retire to the farthest corners of the house.

There was, of course, great temptation for the twins to neglect their task, and chatter, but they were too conscientious for this.

Neither would have considered it honourable to remove their hands from the keys during practice hour. So the little fingers diligently worked up and down, but the counting often gave way to conversation. Instead of "one-and," Dolly might say, in time with her counting, "Don't *you*,—think *the*,—poles *will*,—come *to*,—day, *Dick*?" And Dick would pound away, as he replied, "Yes, *Pat*,—said *they*,—sure *would*,—come *to*,—day-ay."

Thus a staccato conversation could be kept up while the twenty stiff little fingers were acquiring proper limberness and skill.

"It's enough to drive anybody frantic! I can't stand it!" said Aunt Abbie, as one day she listened to the measured chatter, and its accompaniment of pounded keys that didn't chord.

"I can't either!" declared Aunt Rachel, "and I've made up my mind, Abbie, what to do. We'll get another piano,—a second-hand one will do,—and put it up in the playroom. Then they can practise separately."

"Ye-es," said Miss Abbie, doubtfully; "but they wouldn't like that. They always want to be together."

“Well, they’ll have to stand it. It’s enough to ruin their musical ear, to hear those discords themselves.”

“That’s true. I suppose your plan is a good one.”

So a second piano was bought, and put up in the playroom, and the twins had to do their practising separately, except for a few little duet exercises, which their teacher kindly gave them. And it must be confessed they made better progress than when they combined practising and social conversation.

In addition to the hour for music, Dolly was required to spend an hour every day, sewing.

The Misses Dana believed in that old-fashioned accomplishment, and put the child through a regular course of overhanding, felling, and hemming, insisting on great neatness and accuracy of stitches.

This hour caused Dolly a great many sighs, and even a few tears. She didn’t like needlework, and it was *so* hard to keep her stitches even and true.

But the real hardship was that Dick didn’t have to sew also. It didn’t seem fair that she should work so hard for an hour, while he was free to play or do what he chose.

She remarked this to Aunt Rachel, who saw the justice of the argument, and thought it over.

“That’s true, in a way,” she responded. “There isn’t any occupation so necessary for a boy to learn, as for a girl to learn sewing, but I think that Dick should have a corresponding task.”

So it was arranged that for an hour every day, Dick must do work in the garden. Real work, not just fun. He was to weed both his own and Dolly’s flower-beds, and mow the grass and trim the hedges in their playground, and water the plants, if necessary; in short, do the drudgery work of the garden, while Dolly plodded along at her sewing.

This plan worked finely, and sometimes Dick had the playground in such perfect order that he could put in his hour weeding or mowing the other parts of the lawn. Aunt Rachel bought a small lawn-mower for his use, and under Pat’s instructions his hour’s hard work each day taught him much of the real science of gardening.

When the twins had been at Dana Dene a week, they had as yet made no acquaintances beside Jack Fuller. This had happened only because the ladies had not found it convenient to take the children to call elsewhere, and Dick and Dolly themselves had been so wrapped up in their gardens and other joys that they had not cared for outside companionship.

Pat had sent for extra long poles, that their playhouse might be of goodly size. When these came, and were put in place, the tent-shaped arbour was about ten feet by twenty, which was amply large for their purpose. Vines were planted at once, both seeds and cuttings, but of course it would be several weeks before the leaves would form a green roof for them.

However, the sun was not unpleasantly warm in May, and by June or July the leafy roof would be a protection.

In the meantime, Aunt Abbie, who was most ingenious, planned a cosy arrangement for them. In one corner of their playground, Michael built them a table. This had a section of a felled tree trunk for an upright, on which was placed a round top.

From the centre of the table top rose a stout, straight stick, with leather loops nailed on it at intervals. Into these loops could be thrust the handle of a very large Japanese umbrella, which, opened, made a gay and festive-looking roof, and which could be taken into the house in case of rain.

Benches and rustic chairs Michael made for them, too, and Dick helped, being allowed to use his “work-hour” for this.

As the playground achieved all these comforts, it became a most delightful place, and the

children spent whole days there.

Sometimes, good-natured Hannah would bring their dinner out there, and let them eat it under the gay umbrella.

Aunt Abbie gave them a fine garden swing, as she had promised.

This was one of those wooden affairs that will hold four comfortably, but except for Jack Fuller, none but the twins had yet used it.

Aunt Rachel's gift proved to be a fountain.

This was quite elaborate, and had to be set up by workmen who came from town for the purpose. It was very beautiful, and added greatly to the effect of the playground. When the weather grew warmer they were to have goldfish in it, but at present there were aquatic plants and pretty shells and stones.

It was small wonder that the children didn't feel need of other companionship, and had it not been for Jack Fuller, Dolly would never have thought of being lonely.

She and Dick were such good chums that their company was quite sufficient for each other; but when Jack came over to play, he and Dick were quite apt to play boyish games that Dolly didn't care for.

On such occasions she usually brought out her doll-carriage and one or two of her favourite dolls, and played by herself.

And so, it happened, that one afternoon when Dick and Jack were playing leap-frog, Dolly wandered off to the wood with Arabella and Araminta in the perambulator. She never felt lonely in the wood, for there were always the squirrels and birds, and always a chance that she *might* see a fairy.

So, with her dolls, she had company enough, and sitting down by a big flat rock, she set out a table with acorn cups and leaves for plates, and tiny pebbles for cakes and fruit.

Arabella and Araminta had already been seated at the table, and Dolly was talking for them and for herself, as she arranged the feast.

"No, Arabella," she said; "you can't have any jelly pudding to-day, dear, for you are not very well. You must eat bread and milk, and here it is."

She set an acorn cup in front of the doll, and then turned to prepare Araminta's food, when she saw a little girl coming eagerly toward her.

It was a pretty little girl, about her own age, with dark curls, and a pink linen frock.

"Hello," she said, softly, "I want to play with you."

"Come on," said Dolly, more than pleased to have company. "Sit right down at the table. There's a place. I fixed it for Mr. Grey Squirrel, but he didn't come."

"I didn't bring my doll," said the little girl in pink, "I—I came away in a hurry."

"I'll lend you one of mine," said Dolly. "They're Arabella and Araminta; take your choice."

"What's your own name?" said the visitor, as she picked up Araminta.

"Dolly,—Dolly Dana. What's yours?"

"I don't want to tell you," said the little girl, looking confused.

"Never mind," said Dolly, sorry for her guest's evident embarrassment, but thinking her a very strange person. "I'll call you Pinkie, 'cause your dress is such a pretty pink."

"All right," said Pinkie, evidently much relieved.

"You're not—you're not a fairy, are you?" said Dolly, hopefully, yet sure she wasn't one.

"Oh, no," said Pinkie, laughing. "I'm just a little girl, but I—I ran away, and so I don't want to tell you my name."

"Oh, I don't care," said Dolly, who was always willing to accept a situation. "Never mind

about that. Let's play house."

"Yes; let's. You keep this place, 'cause you've fixed your table so nice, and I'll live over here."

Pinkie selected another choice spot for her home, and soon the two families were on visiting terms.

Dolly and her daughter, Arabella, went to call on Pinkie and her daughter, Araminta, and as they had already selected the names of Mrs. Vandeleur and Mrs. Constantine, their own names didn't matter anyway.

Dolly was Mrs. Vandeleur, because she thought that title had a very grand sound, and Pinkie chose Mrs. Constantine because she had just come to that name in her "Outlines of the World's History," and thought it was beautiful.

So Mrs. Vandeleur rang the bell at Mrs. Constantine's mansion, and sent in two green leaves, which were supposed to be the visiting cards of herself and her daughter.

"Come in, come in," said Mrs. Constantine, in a high-pitched voice. "I'm so glad to see you. Won't you sit down?"

Dolly sat down very elegantly on the root of a tree, and propped Arabella against another.

"I'm just going to have supper," said the hostess, "and I hope you and your daughter will give me the pleasure of your company."

"Thank you. I will stay, but I must go 'way right after dessert. I have an engagement with—the fairies."

"Oh, how lovely! Are you going to see them dance?"

"Yes," said Dolly, greatly pleased to learn that Pinkie believed in fairies; "they sent me a special invitation."

"I'll go with you," said Mrs. Constantine, promptly. "I'm always invited to their dances."

So again the acorn cups and leaves came into use, and the four drank unlimited cups of tea, and ate all sorts of things, Arabella having apparently recovered from her indisposition.

"Now, we'll go to the fairies' ball," said Pinkie, as with a sweep of her hand she cleared the table of dishes and viands and all. "What shall we wear?"

"I'll wear red velvet," said Dolly, whose tastes were gay, "and a wide light-blue sash, and gold slippers."

"You'll look lovely," declared Mrs. Constantine. "I'll wear spangled blue satin, and a diamond crown."

"Then I'll have a diamond crown, too," said Dolly.

"No; you have a ruby one. We don't want to be just alike."

"Yes, I'll have a ruby one, and my daughter can have a diamond one, and your daughter a ruby one,—then we'll be fair all around."

"Yes, that's fair," agreed Pinkie; "now let's start."

They carried the dolls with them, and going a little farther into the wood, they selected a smooth, mossy place where fairies might easily dance if they chose.

"We must fix it up for them," said Pinkie; "so they'll want to come."

Eagerly the two girls went to work. They picked up any bits of stick or stone that disfigured the moss, and then, at Pinkie's direction, they made a circular border of green leaves, and what few wild flowers they could find.

A row of stones was laid as an outside border, and a branch of green was stuck upright in the centre.

"Now it looks pretty," said Pinkie, with a nod of satisfaction. "Let's sit down and wait."

"Will they *really* come?" asked Dolly, as with Araminta and Arabella they seated themselves near by.

"Oh, no, I s'pose not," said Pinkie, with a little sigh. "I've done this thing so many times, and they never *have* come. But it's fun to do it, and then I always think perhaps they *may*."

But they waited what seemed a long time, and as no fairies came to dance, and the shadows began to grow deeper, Dolly said she must go home.

"Yes, I must too," said Pinkie, looking troubled.

"See here, Dolly," she said, as they walked along; "don't you want to come here and play with me again?"

"'Course I do," exclaimed Dolly. "Every day."

"Well, you can't do it, unless you keep it secret. You mustn't tell anybody,—not anybody in the world."

"Not even Dick and the aunties?"

"No, not anybody. If you tell, we can't play here."

"Pinkie, *are* you a fairy, after all?" said Dolly, looking at her earnestly.

She was quite unable, otherwise, to think of any reason to keep their acquaintance secret.

"Well—maybe I am," said Pinkie, slowly.

"And that's why you haven't any name!" exclaimed Dolly, rapturously. "But I didn't s'pose real fairies were so big, and so 'zactly like little girls."

"Real fairies aren't. I'm just a—just a sort of a fairy. Oh, Dolly, don't ask questions. Only, remember, if you tell anybody about me, we can't play here in the woods any more. Will you promise?"

"Yes, I'll promise," said Dolly, solemnly, awed by Pinkie's great earnestness.

And then they separated, and Dolly ran home with her dolls.

CHAPTER VIII

A SECRET

Dolly was very quiet after she reached home. She was greatly puzzled at the events of the afternoon.

"Of course," she thought, "Pinkie *couldn't* be a fairy. She is just as much a live little girl as I am. And yet, why should any nice little girl,—and she surely is a very nice little girl,—want our acquaintance kept secret?"

Dolly remembered a little girl in Chicago, who loved to have "secrets," but they were very simple affairs, usually a new slate pencil, or a coming birthday party. She had never heard of such a foolish secret as not telling your name!

And so, the thought *would* come back; what if Pinkie should be a real fairy? To be sure, she had always thought fairies were tiny folk, but she had never seen one, so how could she know?

And Pinkie was so well versed in making a fairies' dancing ground, and she appeared so mysteriously,—apparently from nowhere at all! Oh, if it should be! And then, that would explain the secret part of it,—for fairies always want to be kept secret. But on the other hand, that pink kilted dress of starched linen! Fairies always wore gauzy robes, and carried wands, and had wings. Well, yes, that was the popular notion, but who had seen them, to know for sure?

These thoughts chased through Dolly's mind as she sat at the supper table, and Aunt Rachel soon noticed the child's absorption.

"What's the matter, dearie?" she asked; "aren't you well?"

"Oh, yes, Auntie; I—I was just thinking."

"I know what's the matter with Dollums," said Dick, a little shamefacedly. "It's 'cause Jack Fuller and I played leap-frog and things she didn't like, and so she went off by herself, and was lonesome. I'm sorry, Dolly."

"Why, Dick Dana!" exclaimed his twin; "it wasn't that a bit! I'm glad you had fun with Jack, and I didn't care a spick-speck! I had a lovely time myself."

"Where were you, dear?" asked Aunt Abbie.

"In the wood, with my two big dolls," said Dolly, truthfully, but she had a strange feeling of dishonesty.

She had never had a secret before; had never told anything except the *whole* truth; and the *part* truth, as she had told it now, troubled her conscience.

Yet she had promised Pinkie not to tell about her, so whether Pinkie was fairy or little girl, Dolly felt herself bound by her promise.

"Auntie," she said, after a pause, "are there really fairies?"

"No, child, of course not. You know there aren't."

"Yes, I s'pose so. But if there were any, how big would they be?"

"Don't ask silly questions, Dolly. There are no such beings as fairies."

"Oh, I don't know, Aunt Rachel," put in Dick. "You know, just because we've never seen any,—that doesn't prove there aren't any."

"But how big would they be, Dick?" persisted Dolly.

"Oh, little bits of things. A dozen of them could dance on a toad-stool, I expect."

That settled it in Dolly's mind. Of course Pinkie wasn't a fairy then, for what Dick said was always so.

But Aunt Abbie changed the situation. She had more imagination than Aunt Rachel, and she idly fell into the discussion.

"I'm not sure of that, Dick," she said. "I always imagine fairies to be about our own size. You know Cinderella's fairy godmother was a grown-up lady."

"Oh," said Dolly, her eyes shining with interest. "Then do you think, Aunt Abbie, that there could be a little girl fairy, about as big as me?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so; if there are fairies at all. But I'm not sure that there are."

"Would you believe it if you saw one?"

"Yes, if I were awake, and sure I was not dreaming."

Dolly stared at Aunt Abbie, as if fascinated by her words. Then Pinkie *might* be a fairy, after all!

"You're a queer child, Dolly," said Aunt Rachel, looking at the little girl's perplexed face. "And when you find your fairies, don't bring them in the house, for there's no knowing what tricks they may cut up. They're said to be mischievous little people."

"Of course they're little," argued Dick. "I think you're mistaken about Cinderella's godmother, Aunt Abbie. I think she was a little mite of a lady."

"Perhaps so, Dicky. I'm not much of an authority on fairy lore, I'll admit."

And then, somehow, the matter was dropped, and nothing more was said about fairies or their probable size.

But a little later, when the twins were alone in their playroom, Dolly reopened the subject.

"Dick," she began, "why do you think fairies must be little?"

"Dolly, what's the matter with you and your fairies? Why are you bothering so much about 'em all of a sudden?"

"Oh, nothing; I just want to know."

"It isn't nothing! Have you been seeing fairies, or what? You've got to tell me all about it."

"I can't, Dick."

"You can't? Why not, I'd like to know! We never have secrets from each other. You know we don't."

"But I can't tell you about this. I promised."

"Well, unpromise then! Who'd you promise?"

"I can't tell you that either."

"Look here, Dolly Dana, who could you promise not to tell me anything? Was it Pat or Michael?"

"No."

"Then who was it?"

"I can't tell you."

"Pooh, what a silly! Why, Dolly, we're twins,—we always have to tell each other everything."

"I know it, Dick, and I want to tell you, awful, but you know yourself it's wrong to break a promise."

"Well, you might tell me who you promised it to."

"That's part of the secret."

"Oho, it *is* a secret, is it? Well, Dolly Dana, if you've got a secret from *me*, you can keep it, —I don't care!"

This was too much for Dolly's loyal little twin-heart.

"I don't want to keep it, Dick; I want to tell you! But I promised her I wouldn't, so what can

I do?"

"Get her to let you off your promise. I s'pose it's Hannah or Delia."

"Maybe I can do that," and Dolly's face looked a little brighter.

"Well, do; and don't talk any more about it, till you can tell me all of it, whatever it is. Dolly, it isn't anything wrong, is it?"

"No; I don't see how it can be wrong."

"Then let up on it, till you're ready to talk square. *I* never had a secret from *you*."

"I know it; and I'll never have one from you again!"

So peace was restored, and Dolly said no more about fairies. But after she was tucked up in her own little white bed that night, she lay awake in the darkness for a long time, trying to puzzle it all out. One minute it would seem too absurd to think a little girl was a fairy; the next minute, it would seem just as absurd for a little girl to appear in the woods like that, and refuse to tell her name, and insist that their acquaintance be kept a secret! *That* was exactly what a fairy would do!

So, after reasoning round and round in a circle, Dolly fell asleep, and dreamed that she was a fairy herself, with a pink linen dress, and a pair of wings and a golden wand.

The next afternoon Jack Fuller was again at Dana Dene to play with Dick, and again Dolly trotted off to the woods. She found Pinkie sitting on a flat stone, waiting for her. The same pink linen frock, the same straw hat, with pink rosettes on it, and the same sweet-faced, curly-haired Pinkie. Dolly was *so* glad to see her, and fairy or mortal, she already loved her better than any little girl she had ever known.

But Pinkie was not so gay and merry as yesterday. She looked troubled, and Dolly's sensitive little heart knew it at once.

"Come on," she said, taking hold of Pinkie's hand; "let's play."

"All right," said Pinkie, "I've brought my own dolls, this time."

And sure enough, there were two dolls as big and beautiful as Arabella and Araminta. Pinkie said her dolls' names were Baby Belle and Baby Bess, and, as it seemed the most natural thing to do, they began to play tea-party at once.

But Dolly wanted, first, to settle the matter of the secret.

"Pinkie," she said, "you're a really, truly little girl, aren't you?"

"Course I am," said Pinkie, smiling. "I just said I was a fairy for fun."

"Yes; I know it. But I want you to let me tell about you at home. It's silly to make a secret of it."

"Well, tell 'em, I don't care. I'm not coming here to play any more, anyway."

Now Dolly looked dismayed. "Why not?" she asked, and went on without waiting for an answer. "I won't tell my aunts, if you don't want me to, but I must tell my brother Dick. He's my twin, and we never have secrets from each other. Why, here he comes now!"

Running toward them across the field, they saw the two boys.

"Is that your brother with Jack Fuller?" asked Pinkie, and with this recognition of Jack, Dolly's last faint hope that Pinkie *might* be a fairy, vanished.

"Yes; I wonder what they want."

The boys had really come in search of Dolly.

Dick had felt himself rather selfish to play with Jack, while Dolly had only her dolls for company, so he had proposed that they go and find her, and then all play together some games that she would like. Jack had agreed willingly enough, so they made for the woods, whither Dick had seen Dolly go, wheeling her two big dolls.

"Hello, Phyllis Middleton," cried Jack, as he spied Pinkie. "What are you doing here?"

The secret was out!

Dolly felt a blank pall of despair fall over her heart. Pinkie, then, was Phyllis Middleton, the daughter of the Middletons whom Aunt Rachel detested, and would have no dealings with! Indeed, Dolly had been forbidden to speak to any of the Middletons. And then, as Dolly's thoughts flew rapidly on, she realised that Pinkie had known all this, and that was why she said if Dolly knew her name they couldn't play together any more!

Poor Dolly! Not only to lose her new-made friend, but to learn that the friend was really a naughty little girl, who had deliberately done wrong.

"Hello, Jack!" said Phyllis. "I know I ought not to come here, and I'm not coming again."

"Well," said Dick, throwing himself down on the ground; "is this your secret, Dollums?"

"Yes," said Dolly, almost ready to cry. "This is my Pinkie, and I love her, and now she's the little girl Aunt Rachel said we couldn't play with."

"Why not?" cried Dick, who had forgotten the Middleton ban.

Phyllis took up the story.

"I don't know the beginning of it," she said; "but my mother, and Miss Rachel Dana don't like each other, and won't go to each other's houses. And when I heard a little girl had come here to live, I wanted to come over, but mother wouldn't let me."

"And Aunt Rachel forbade me to go to your house, too," put in Dolly. "I think it's awful for grown-up ladies to get mad like that."

"They've been mad for lots of years," said Jack Fuller. "I've heard my mother talk about it to the other ladies. They call it the Dana-Middleton feud."

"What was it about?" asked Dick.

"Nobody knows," replied Jack. "At least, none of us children. Of course, when there weren't any children at the Dana house, we didn't care anything about it; but now, it's pretty if you two can't play with the Middletons! Why, they go to our parties and our school and our Sunday school, and our picnics and everything! I guess Miss Dana and Mrs. Middleton'll have to make up now."

"They won't," said Phyllis, mournfully. "I heard mother and father talking about it. And they said I mustn't come over here, or speak to Dolly or anything. And then, yesterday, I did come over here to the wood,—it's right next to our last orchard,—and Dolly and I had such fun, I thought I'd come every day, and not tell anybody. But after I went to bed last night, I thought about it, and I know it's wrong; so I'm not going to do it any more. I just came to-day to tell Dolly so. And after I go home, I'm going to confess to mother about it."

Phyllis's eyes were full of tears, and as she finished speaking, and Dolly's arms went round her, both girls cried in their mutual affliction.

The boys were highly indignant at the whole situation.

"It's a shame!" cried Dick. "If Aunt Rachel wants to be mad at Mrs. Middleton, let her; but I don't see why they shouldn't let Phyllis and Dolly be friends. Have you got any brothers, Phyllis?"

"Only a little one, six years old," was the reply. "There's just the two of us."

"And you live just next house to us," went on Dick. "You and Dolly could have lovely times together. I'm going to ask Aunt Rachel myself if you two can't be friends."

"It wouldn't do any good," said Phyllis, wiping her eyes. "She wouldn't give in, and, even if she did, my mother wouldn't."

"Well, I'm going to try it, anyway," stoutly persisted Dick. "It can't do any harm, and if

Aunt Rachel *should* give in, she might persuade your mother, you know.”

Phyllis looked a little hopeful at this, but Dolly said:

“Aunt Rachel won’t let me play with you; I know it. She has said so a dozen times, and she’s awful stubborn. But I’m glad you told, Pinkie, ’cause it wouldn’t have been right for us to play together and not tell.”

“No, I know it,” agreed Phyllis. “I would have told you yesterday, only it was so funny when you thought I was a fairy! I thought I’d pretend I was one, and that would take away the wrong. But it didn’t, and when I thought all about it, I knew we couldn’t keep on that way.”

The Dana twins were conscientious children, and they were both glad when Phyllis talked like this; for it had been a shock to Dolly to discover Pinkie’s deceit, and she felt relieved to learn that it was only impulsive and quickly repented of. But this didn’t alter the sad fact that the two little girls could not be playmates.

“It’s just horrid!” said Dolly, her tears welling up afresh. “We could have such lovely times together! Playing dolls, and tea-parties, and everything. I think Aunt Rachel is mean!”

“I think so, too,” said Jack Fuller, “and I do believe you could coax her into letting you two girls play together, even if the grown-up ladies don’t make up.”

“Maybe we could,” said Dick, hopefully, but Phyllis shook her head.

“Mother wouldn’t, even if Miss Dana did,” she repeated. “I was a naughty girl to come here at all. I wish I hadn’t; then I wouldn’t have known how nice Dolly was.”

Again the little girls wept, and the boys looked at them helplessly.

“Well, anyway,” said Dick, at last, “I’m going home to have a try at it. I’m going straight to Aunt Rachel and tell her all about it. It may make a difference, now that you girls really have met.”

“All right,” said Phyllis, but she showed no hope of Dick’s success.

“I say,” exclaimed Jack, “let’s all go! I mean, let’s take Phyllis, and all go to Miss Rachel and ask her about it. If she sees the two girls crying to beat the band, it may soften her some.”

It seemed a daring proposition, but the twins approved of it.

“Oh, do,” cried Dolly, eagerly. “Come on, Pinkie, let’s go right now.”

“I can’t,” said Pinkie, firmly. “Mother told me never to go to Miss Dana’s house for anything at all.”

No amount of coaxing would prevail, and matters seemed at a deadlock, until Dick exclaimed:

“Then you stay here, and I’ll go get Auntie Rachel and make her come out here right now.”

“It won’t do any good,” moaned Phyllis.

“I know, about your mother. But maybe, if Miss Rachel gives in first, she can persuade your mother.”

“Maybe,” said Phyllis, worn out with the conflict. “Go on if you want to.”

And Dick went.

CHAPTER IX

PHYLLIS

“Aunt Rachel,” said Dick, marching to the library, “will you do something for me?”
“Probably I will, my boy. What is it?”

“I want you to come and take a walk with me.”

“But it’s nearly supper-time, Dicky; quite time for you to go and brush your hair, and put on a fresh collar. Where’s Dolly?”

“Oh, Aunt Rachel, please come,—it’s very important!”

Noticing the serious expression on Dick’s earnest little face, Aunt Rachel became frightened.

“What is the matter, Dick?” she exclaimed. “Has anything happened to Dolly? Has she hurt herself?”

“No; she hasn’t hurt herself; but come, please, Aunt Rachel,—do!”

Throwing a light shawl round her, Miss Rachel went with Dick, quite sure that some accident had befallen Dolly. It was quite a little walk to the woods, and Dick began to wonder whether Phyllis would have waited, or whether she would have become scared and gone home. She seemed like a timid little thing, and Dick well knew that Miss Rachel’s anger was a formidable thing to brave. He felt far from calm himself.

“Where are you taking me?” said Aunt Rachel, as they crossed the orchard.

“To the woods,” replied Dick, briefly; “Dolly is there.”

And Aunt Rachel said no more, but walked rapidly along by Dick’s side, her mind full of horrible imaginings of Dolly, perhaps fallen from a tree, or in some other dreadful plight. When she reached the wood she saw the two little girls, seated on the flat stone, their arms about each other, and their faces red and tear-stained. Indeed, the big tears even now rolled down Dolly’s cheeks, as she saw the stern expression that came over Aunt Rachel’s face.

“Phyllis Middleton!” exclaimed the angry-looking lady; “what does this mean? You know you are forbidden to step foot on my property!”

“Yes’m,” began Phyllis, timidly, but Dick took the helm.

“Aunt Rachel,” he said, “I asked you to come out here, ’cause Phyllis wouldn’t go to the house. And I want to ask you to let her be Dolly’s friend; they love each other a heap.”

Then Aunt Rachel’s wrath was turned toward her niece.

“Dolly,” she said, severely, “you know I positively forbade you to speak to Phyllis Middleton.”

“Yes, Auntie; b-but I didn’t know it was Phyllis, when I first spoke to her.”

“Well, you know it now. Come away from her at once. Phyllis, go straight home, and don’t ever dare come here again.”

The case was hopeless.

Phyllis withdrew herself from Dolly’s embrace, and rose to go away.

Jack Fuller stood by, unable to help, and very nearly crying himself in sympathy with the two forlorn little girls.

Aunt Rachel, in her surprise and indignation, had seated herself on the edge of a big stone, opposite Dolly and Phyllis, and sat with frowning face, waiting for the unwelcome visitor to depart.

In her extremity of despair, Dolly had an inspiration. With a cry of, "Oh, *please*, Auntie Rachel!" she sprang at her aunt, and threw her arms around the neck of the irate lady. She squeezed her until she nearly choked her; she showered kisses on her face and neck; she whispered in her ear, "Please, dear Auntie, oh, *please* let me have her for my little friend; I love her so! *Please*, Auntie!"

Dick, anxiously watching Miss Rachel's face, saw a change. Not only did it become warm and red from the strangling hugs she was undergoing, but he felt sure there was a relenting expression in her eyes.

Partly out of gratitude for this, and partly from a desire to further Dolly's cause, he too rushed at his aunt, and added his affectionate demonstrations to those of his sister. His arms somehow found room, too, round her neck, and he industriously kissed the other side of her face, while he cried, "*Please*, Auntie Rachel, even if you don't like the Middletons, please let Phyllis and Dolly be friends! *Please*, Auntie!"

So cyclonic was the beginning of this performance, and so vigorous its continuance, that Miss Rachel was soon on the verge of physical collapse, and wildly waved her hands, in a futile endeavour to shake off the besiegers.

Phyllis and Jack were appalled at the scene, and were almost uncertain whether the attack was really affectionate or of a hostile nature.

"For gracious' sake, Dolly, *do* stop!" cried Miss Rachel, at last, as her glasses flew off, and her carefully arranged coiffure became a wreck. "Dick, let go of me!"

"Yes, Auntie," he said, kneeling at one side, and possessing himself of one of her hands, while Dolly did the same with the other; "but, Auntie, do say yes, won't you?"

"Won't you, Auntie?" echoed Dolly; "won't you, Auntie? Please, dear Auntie Rachel, won't you? *Please!*"

The words, repeated so often, seemed to become meaningless, but not so the beseeching expression on the two upturned, pleading little faces.

Aunt Rachel looked at them,—Dick's eager hopeful gaze; Dolly's tearful, despairing eyes,—and her hard heart melted.



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She put an arm round each of the quivering little bodies, and said softly:

“Wait a minute, dears, let me think it over.”

If Miss Rachel needed further incentive, the joy that flashed into the twins’ faces must have given it to her, for she went on almost immediately:

“You cannot understand the grown-up part of this; you cannot be told about why Mrs. Middleton and I are not on friendly terms; but this I will grant. If Phyllis’s mother will let her be Dolly’s friend, I shall be glad to have it so. If Phyllis is allowed to come to Dana Dene, Dolly

may also visit her and you may play together all you like. There is really no reason why you children should suffer for the sake of your elders, and I see that clearly now. Come here, Phyllis."

Phyllis rose and went to Miss Rachel, who looked her over with evident interest.

"You are a nice child," she said, at last, with a nod of approval. "I shall be glad to have you become Dolly's friend. Do you think your mother will object?"

"I know she will, Miss Dana," said Phyllis, sadly; "I am sure she won't let me go to Dana Dene."

"Then I shall go to see her, myself, and I fancy I can persuade her."

Miss Rachel said this with a majestic air, yet with a grim smile, and the children felt that though they certainly did not understand the "grown-up part of it," yet their cause was won, and Dolly and Phyllis would be permitted to play together to their hearts' content.

"Thank you, Miss Rachel," said Phyllis, timidly taking her hand, and feeling that she ought to show her gratitude by some demonstration, after the example set her by the twins.

Miss Rachel kissed her gently on the forehead, and then put her hand in Dolly's; bidding the two little girls seal their friendship with a kiss, and then say good-bye until to-morrow.

"Scamper home, across the orchard, Phyllis," she went on, "and tell your mother all about it, if you choose; and say I shall call on her this evening."

Jack went with Phyllis, as that was the way toward his own home, and the three Danas went back to the house.

"Oh, Auntie, you are so good," said Dolly, as, with her arm round her aunt's waist, she walked by her side. "It was lovely of you to give up your favourite feud for me!"

Miss Rachel smiled at Dolly's choice of words, but she only said:

"It is right, dearie. It would be very foolish to keep you two little girls apart because of what happened to your ancestors, twenty years ago."

"Yes'm; and are you going to keep on feuding with Mrs. Middleton?"

"I don't know yet," said Miss Rachel, smiling again; "if I do, it will be because she insists upon it. But I feel sure I can persuade her to feel as I do, about you children."

"You're a brick, Auntie," declared Dick, who walked at her other side. "I was 'most sure you'd cave in when you saw how the girls felt about it."

"It was really the way you two felt about it, that persuaded me; indeed, if I hadn't 'caved in,' as you call it, I think you would have squeezed me to pieces."

"Yes, we're good coaxers," said Dick, modestly. "We used to coax Auntie Helen that way; but she always got to laughing."

"It wasn't a humorous occasion, to-day," said Aunt Rachel, and then they all went in to supper.

Aunt Abbie, who was wondering what had become of them, was then told the whole story, which greatly interested her.

"And now," said Dolly, as everything had been explained, "you see why I was asking about fairies last night. I didn't really think Phyllis was a fairy, but she came so—so unexpected, you know, and she wouldn't tell me her name, and she told me to keep it all a secret."

"I think that part of it was a little naughty," said Aunt Abbie, judicially.

"Yes'm," agreed Dolly. "But you see she 'pented, and to-day she came to tell me that she had 'cided it *was* naughty, and she wasn't coming any more. So that took away the naughtiness, didn't it, Auntie Rachel?"

"Yes, I think it did, dearie. I feel sure Phyllis is a conscientious little girl, and will be a good

friend for you in every way.”

“But I’ll always call her Pinkie,” said Dolly; “‘cause I called her that at first, and Phyllis is such a grown-up name. Will you go over and see about it right away, Auntie?”

“After a while, Dolly. But I shall not return until after you’ve gone to bed, so don’t think any more about it till morning.”

Aunt Rachel spoke calmly, but the children little knew what it meant to her to subdue her pride and make the advance toward a truce with Mrs. Middleton. Their quarrel, though it had occurred many years ago, was as bitter as ever, and reconciliation seemed impossible. Neither had ever been willing to suggest such a thing, and though kind-hearted friends had tried to bring it about, their efforts had met with no success. Miss Abbie was, of course, amazed at the way things were going, but her offer to accompany her sister was met with a gentle but decided refusal.

And so, nobody ever knew what passed between the two neighbours that evening. Whatever way she humiliated herself, or whatever arguments she used, Miss Rachel never told; but, at least, her main errand was successful, and Mrs. Middleton agreed to let Phyllis and Dolly play together all they liked, and visit at each other’s homes whenever they chose.

As for the two ladies themselves, they didn’t at once forgive and forget all of their long-standing unpleasantness, but they agreed to be, at least, calling acquaintances, for the children’s sake; and I may as well say here that eventually the breach was healed, and by degrees they became really friendly neighbours.

Dolly was too excited and anxious to sleep, so when she heard Miss Rachel come in, though it was late, she sprang out of bed, and throwing a blue kimono over her little frilled nightgown, she ran out into the hall, and called down over the banisters:

“Is it all right, Auntie Rachel? Is it all right?”

“Yes, it’s all right, Dolly. Go back to bed, you’ll catch cold.”

By this time, Dick had bounced out of his room. A bath-robe was round him, over his pink-striped pajamas, and as he heard Aunt Rachel’s assurance that their cause was won, he whispered to Dolly, “Let’s go down and hug her!”

“Let’s!” replied Dolly, and the two bare-footed, dressing-gowned little figures flew downstairs and precipitated themselves upon the already exhausted lady.

“Don’t, children!” cried Aunt Abbie, as Miss Rachel was almost lost to sight in clouds of eider-down flannel, and four eager, waving arms. “Don’t! you’ll wear Auntie Rachel out, she’s almost collapsed now.”

“No, Abbie; let them be. I like it,” gasped Aunt Rachel, from behind two curly heads that seemed to be devouring her.

So Aunt Abbie only laughed, inwardly rejoicing that the children had brought about an amicable adjustment of the old quarrel, and glad, too, that her reserved and undemonstrative sister enjoyed the wild antics of the two little savages.

“Auntie Abbie next!” shouted Dick, gleefully, and Aunt Rachel received a respite, as the twins’ attentions were showered upon their other aunt.

But she wouldn’t stand quite so much.

“Be off with you!” she cried. “You’re worse than a pair of little bear-cubs!”

“We are bear-cubs,” cried Dick, enchanted with the suggestion. Then he growled, and pawed and clawed at Aunt Abbie, winding up with a hug that nearly cracked her bones.

Dolly, always ready to take her cue, was also a bear-cub, and between them they made Aunt Abbie’s life miserable for a few minutes.

“Scamper now!” she cried, as she emerged, laughing, from the latest onslaught. “Run to bed, both of you. I’ve had enough of this!”

So, with final pats and kisses all round, the twins went upstairs, and were soon snugly in bed once more.

Dolly thought she should never go to sleep, she was so happy in the thoughts of her new friend.

Dear Pinkie! She was so pretty and sweet, and Dolly smiled to herself at thought of all the fun they could have playing together. They would always be friends, even after they grew up to be young ladies, and they would never have a foolish quarrel, as Pinkie’s mother and Auntie Rachel had had. And so, fairly revelling in happy anticipations, Dolly fell asleep.

Downstairs, the two sisters talked long and earnestly.

“It’s a blessing those two children ever came here,” said Miss Abbie, at last.

“It is a blessing in some ways,” said Miss Rachel, “but they’re going to be a terrible responsibility. Such overflowing spirits I never saw! They can’t be still a second. And we must stop these fearful tornadoes of affection!”

“Oh, I thought you enjoyed them!”

“I do enjoy their hearty demonstrations and endearments. They’re so real and spontaneous. But we must curb them, for it isn’t good for the children to be allowed such savagery. For it is savagery.”

“It is, indeed!” agreed Aunt Abbie, ruefully. “My arm’s lame yet, from their squeezing.”

“Well, we’ll correct them. But I don’t want to be too harsh, poor little motherless things.”

“Yes, and fatherless, too. We must be very good to them, Rachel, but it isn’t true kindness to be too indulgent, you know.”

“No, of course not. We must be firm, yet gentle.”

And so the two ladies discussed the management of the twins, not realising at all, that on the contrary, the twins were managing them! For though good and obedient children, Dick and Dolly generally succeeded in getting their own sweet way, as witness the case of Phyllis Middleton.

CHAPTER X

AN AUCTION SALE

Life at Dana Dene settled down into a pleasant routine that was in no sense monotony. Every day the sewing and the practising and the gardening had their appointed hours. But this left hours and hours of play-time, and the twins improved them all.

Phyllis and Dolly were very chummy little companions, and scarcely a day passed without their seeing each other.

Dick and Jack Fuller were chums too, and though the twins became acquainted with many of the other children in Heatherton, they liked these earliest made friends best of all.

Often they went to town, for Dana Dene was about a mile out from the village itself. Sometimes they drove in state with the aunties, or perhaps less formally, on morning errands. Sometimes they rode on the big spring wagon with Pat or Michael, and sometimes on pleasant days, they walked.

One delightful afternoon, the aunties had gone to sewing society, and the twins were holding a consultation as to what would be the most fun for them to do.

“Let’s walk to town and get some soda water,” suggested Dolly.

“All right,” returned Dick; “but we needn’t walk unless we want to. Michael’s going down with the wagon. But he isn’t ready yet.”

“Well, let’s walk on, and then when he comes along we can get in, if we want to.”

“Yes, and we can ride home, anyway.”

So after arranging with Michael to look out for them on the way, Dick and Dolly started off. They loved to walk to town, for there was so much of interest along the way. The first part, more or less wooded, showed various enticing spots to sit down and rest a while.

Squirrels were apt to come round and be sociable, or birds would sing little songs of greeting from the branches. There were always new wild-flowers, and just now the wild roses were opening, and daisies were in bloom.

And, if they were very cautious, there was always a chance of seeing fairies.

Now that Pinkie was understood, Dolly returned to her original idea of fairies,—tiny, fragile beings, with wings and wands.

Dick had some doubts as to their existence, but was always on the alert to catch sight of them in the woods.

Then, after the woody part was passed, came the beginnings of the streets, with houses few and far apart; and then the bridge,—always a fine place to linger,—and then houses closer together, many of which were good stopping-places, and finally the business portion of the little town itself.

Here were fascinating shops, with windows delightfully full of tempting wares, also a caterer’s shop, where one could choose between cakes and ice cream, or candy and soda water.

The twins were allowed fifty cents apiece each week for spending money. With this, they could do exactly as they chose, with the stipulation that not more than ten cents in one day should be spent for edibles. As they conscientiously obeyed this rule, the aunts felt sure they could not seriously harm their digestion. And, besides, they did not buy sweets every time they went to town. Sometimes it was marbles or tops or ribbons for dolls.

On this particular occasion the twins felt specially rich, for they each had an untouched half

dollar just given them by Aunt Rachel, and they had also a goodly portion of the previous week's income still unspent. Not that they expected necessarily to spend it, but it seemed pleasant to have their fund with them, and if they should see anything very desirable they might purchase it.

So they trudged along, with open minds, ready to accommodate anything that offered in the way of interest or pleasure.

As they reached the main street they saw a great crowd of people in front of one of the shops, and wondered what the reason might be. Coming nearer, they saw a red flag waving over the door, and Dick exclaimed:

"Why, it's an auction! I never saw one before; come on, Dolly, let's go in."

So in the twins went, and soon became greatly interested in the proceedings.

They edged through the crowd, until they were quite near the auctioneer, and then they listened, spellbound, to his discourse. Never having seen an auction sale before, the manner of conducting it appealed to them, and they breathlessly watched and listened as one lot after another was sold to the bidders.

The stock was that of a clothing emporium, and consisted of ready-made suits for both men and women.

"I'd like to buy something that way," said Dick to his sister, "but they're only grown-ups' clothes, and anyway, they cost too much. If they put up anything small I'm going to bid."

"Maybe they'll have handkerchiefs or something like that," suggested Dolly, eager also to join the game of bidding.

But there were no small articles for sale, nothing but men's suits and ladies' costumes, so Dick and Dolly lost hope of being able to bid for anything.

They wandered round the place, meeting several people whom they knew, and who spoke pleasantly to them. But they were all grown-ups,—there were no children there but the twins, so hand in hand they wandered about, always drifting back to hear the auctioneer crying out:

"Ten,—ten,—do I hear eleven?" or "Going, going—gone!"

They listened carefully to his phraseology, for they well knew "auction" would be one of their favourite games in the near future, and Dick wanted to learn the lingo, so that he could play auctioneer after the most approved fashion. At last the sale was about over, and the audience began to go away. Only a few men remained, and the fixtures of the shop were then put up. Office furniture, show-cases and such things were sold quickly, and then was put up a lot of wax tailors' dummies. These wax figures, both men and women, were so comical that Dick and Dolly laughed aloud to see them put up for sale. It was almost like selling people. But the man who bought them didn't seem to think it funny at all. He bid them in, like any other merchandise, but he refused to take one of them, saying it was too badly damaged.

This unfortunate one was a wax-faced lady whose cheek was badly dented and marred, thus making her undesirable as a window attraction. She was carelessly set aside, and the twins looked at her with curiosity.

"Dick," whispered Dolly, "I'd love to have her! She'd be more fun than a big doll. Do you s'pose we could get her?"

"I dunno. It would be fun! We could rig her up, and set her up in the playground. How much money have you?"

"Just seventy-seven cents."

"And I have eighty-six. Let's ask the man."

So Dick stepped up to the auctioneer, and said:

"Could you auction up that other wax lady, sir?"

"That one, kid? Why, she's no good."

"Not for a shopman, I know, but—if she didn't cost so much, we'd like to have her."

"You would! Well, you're two pretty nice little children, suppose I give her to you?"

Dick hesitated. It seemed too great a favour, and beside he wanted the fun of bidding.

"Well, you see," he said, "I think we'd rather pay, if it isn't too much, because,—you see,—we want to do that calling out."

"Oho! You want the real auctioneering game, do you? Well, I'll have her put up."

The auctioneer was a jolly, good-natured man, and as his task was about over, he felt inclined to humour the children.

"Here," he called to his assistant, "put up that golden-haired goddess."

Appreciating the situation, the man set the wax dummy upon the platform.

"Here you are!" cried the auctioneer. "What am I bid for this lovely lady? Though slightly marred in the face, she has a good heart, and is warranted good-tempered and kind. What am I bid?"

Dick hesitated; now that the time had come he felt suddenly shy, and felt uncertain how much to offer.

"Ten cents!" came a voice from another part of the room. Then Dick felt that he was really in the business at last, and he called out sturdily:

"Fifteen!"

"Fifteen," echoed the auctioneer. "Fifteen! do I hear any more? Only fifteen cents for this beautiful work of art?"

"Twenty!" called the other voice, and for some reason the auctioneer scowled.

"Twenty!" he cried; "twenty? Do I hear twenty-five?"

"Twenty-five!" cried Dick, his face all aglow with the excitement of the moment.

"Twenty-five!" sang out the auctioneer. "Twenty-five! Is there another bid?"

But the menacing face he turned toward the other bidder must have silenced him, for he said no more.

"Twenty-five!" went on the auctioneer, quite gaily now. "Twenty-five! That seems too cheap for this Prize Beauty. Twenty-five! Is that all?"

It *did* seem too cheap, and Dick suddenly felt that it ought to bring more. Besides, the auctioneer's voice was persuasive, and so, still in the spirit of the game, Dick cried out, "Thirty!"

The auctioneer suddenly choked, and the man in the back of the room burst into shouts of laughter, but Dick didn't mind now. With shining eyes, he awaited the auctioneer's next move, and seeing this, the smiling gentleman went on:

"Thirty! Thirty cents for this Darling Dame. She looks like that! Do I hear any more? Thirty—going—going——"

"Thirty-five!" said Dolly, timidly, but in clear tones.

Dick looked at her admiringly. Dolly *was* a trump. He was glad she had a part in the great game too.

"Thirty-five!" called the auctioneer, red in the face, but preserving his gravity. "Thirty-five!"

"Forty!" cried Dick.

"Forty-five!" said Dolly.

"Fifty!" yelled Dick, smiling at his sister.

"Fifty-five," she cried, smiling back.

"Stop!" cried the auctioneer, "you two mustn't bid against each other!"

"Why not?" asked Dick. "We have the money. We've more 'n a dollar 'n' a half, together."

"Yes, but one of you can buy this thing if you really want it. So stop bidding, and take it for fifty cents."

"All right," agreed Dick, "we'll each pay twenty-five."

This plan suited Dolly, and the money was paid at once.

"You have to take your goods with you, you know," said the auctioneer, not unkindly, as he watched the two delighted children.

"Yes, we will," said Dolly. "Michael's outside somewhere, with the big wagon. He'll take us all home."

"You stay here with the lady, Dolly," said Dick, "and I'll run out and hunt Michael."

"Go on," said the auctioneer, "I'll look after Miss Dolly and her new friend both."

The auctioneer had children of his own, and was greatly interested in his two young customers.

"What do you want of this affair?" he asked Dolly, after Dick had gone.

"To play with," she returned. "I know we can dress her up and have lots of fun with her."

"Perhaps I can find you some clothes for her here," he offered; "she ought to have a hat and shawl."

"Oh, never mind," said Dolly, easily; "we'll take her home, and I think Aunt Rachel's clothes will fit her. If not, we'll try Hannah's."

The wax lady was simply robed in a drab muslin slip, whose plainness contrasted strangely with the bright pink of her complexion, the large mop of yellow hair, and the waxen forearms—except for her head, neck, and forearms the lady was a sort of wire frame, more or less bent.

But Dolly saw wondrous possibilities, and cared not at all that her ladyship was so imperfectly arrayed at present.

Dick soon returned, and announced that Michael was outside in the wagon.

The auctioneer's obliging assistant carried the wax lady to the door, and then the twins took it.

"The saints preserve us!" cried Michael; "whativer have ye rascally babies been up to now?"

"We've bought a lady, Michael," explained Dolly, "and we want to take her home."

"Well, if so be as she's your lady, home with us she must go."

Michael climbed down from his seat, and assisted the "lady" into the wagon.

"It's lyin' down in the wagon she must ride," he said. "I'll have no waxen image a-settin' up on the seat, an' me, like as not, arristed fer kid-nappin' her! In she goes, and covered up wid these potaty-sacks she'll be, till yez gets her home."

"All right," said Dolly, gleefully, "I don't care. Put her in back, if you want to. But be careful, don't muss up her hair too much!"

At last the "lady" was arranged, and Dick and Dolly clambered up to the seat beside Michael, and home they went.

"You see," Dolly confided to Michael, who was her devoted adorer, "we went to an auction, and we bought the lady."

"An auction! Yez childher! My soul! what will yez be afther doin' next?"

"It isn't hard to go to an auction," said Dick, meditatively. "You just find what you want to buy; and then you see how much money you've got, and then you bid till you get up to it."

"Yis, that's a foine way!" said Michael, appreciatively. "An' yez chose the wax scarecrow,

did yez? Well, give it to me fer my cornfield, it'll be foine to kape the burrds off!"

"You bad Michael," said Dolly. "You're just teasing us. Scarecrow! Why, she's my new doll. I'm going to call her,—what shall we call her, Dick?"

"Lady Eliza Dusenbury," said Dick, promptly, for he was always quick at choosing names. "And I say, Dolly, let's rig her up, hat and all, you know, and stand her up in front of the front door, and ring the bell, and then hide, and see what Hannah'll do!"

"All right; don't you tell, Michael."

"No, Miss Dolly, I'll not tell."

"And you help us, Michael, to get her out and get her fixed up, will you?"

"Yis, I'll help yez, ye good-fer-nothin' shcamps."

When Michael indulged in calling them names, the twins knew he was very good-natured indeed, so they anticipated great fun.

When they reached Dana Dene, the two children jumped down from the wagon and ran into the house. It was easy enough to get in unnoticed, and they went straight to Aunt Rachel's room for clothing for the new friend.

Dolly selected a pretty street suit of dark-blue pongee, made with a coat and skirt. She found also a white waist, and a blue hat trimmed with cornflowers. This was really enough, but she added a veil and a small shopping bag. With these things, the twins hurried to the barn, where Michael had the Lady Eliza waiting for them in the carriage house.

Dolly dressed her, and it was surprising how distinguished she looked in Aunt Rachel's costume. It seemed a very good fit, and the flower-trimmed hat was most becoming to the frizzled yellow hair.

On account of the scar on her cheek, Dolly put on the thin lace veil, which really added to her modish effect. Her arms, which were movable, were adjusted at an elegant angle, and the shopping bag was hung on her left wrist.

Pat had been taken into confidence, and when all was ready the children ran ahead to make sure that the coast was clear.

Discovering that Hannah and Delia were both in the back part of the house, they signalled to Michael, and he and Pat assisted Lady Eliza to the front door. Then Dolly adjusted her hands, and in the right one, which was extended, she placed a visiting card, taken at random from the basket in the hall. Then Michael and Pat went away, Dolly hid in some nearby bushes, and Dick, after a loud ring at the doorbell, flew, to join Dolly in her hiding-place.

CHAPTER XI

FUN WITH LADY ELIZA

Hannah, in her white cap and apron, came at once and opened the door. Being a well-trained maid, she stepped back, and held the door open for the lady to enter, but as the caller did not seem inclined to do so, but persistently held out her card, Hannah took it, saying, "The ladies are not at home, madam."

Still the caller stood motionless, and Hannah looked at her with some curiosity. The lace veil so shrouded her features that they were not very discernible, but when Hannah's glance fell on the rigid, pale hand, she gave a scream:

"My sakes, ma'am! is it dead ye are, or fainted?"

Not being able to grasp at once the truth of the matter, Hannah took the two cold hands in her own, and shook the lady slightly.

Lady Eliza toppled over, and would have fallen to the floor, but that Hannah caught her in her arms, and dragged her into the hall, where she dropped her on a large sofa.

"Delia!" she called, flying to the kitchen, "fetch some water. There's a lady fainted!"

Dick and Dolly, unable to restrain themselves longer, came running in, and met Hannah, who returned, followed by Delia with a bowl of water.

"Hurry up, Hannah," cried Dick. "She's in an awful faint! Can't you bring her to?"

Dolly was dancing around the prostrate form of the visitor, and Michael and Pat were peeping in at the front door.

"Ah, ye scallywags!" cried Delia, realising that some mischief was up. "What are ye up to, now? Who's this leddy?"

So lifelike was the whole effect of the figure, that Delia could not at first take in the fraud. But when she did, she went off in peals of laughter, and Hannah joined in heartily.

"Aren't ye the smart scamps, now!" cried Delia, proud of the latest exploit of the children. "An' will ye look now, Hannah? That's Miss Rachel's best blue dress! I'm wonderin' ye didn't recognise it!"

"I never thought," said Hannah, still gazing half-fearfully at the figure on the sofa. "I took it for granted it was a friendly visitor."

Whereupon Dick outspread Lady Eliza's arms in such a comical way, that Delia went off again in fresh bursts of laughter.

"Now to fool the aunties," said Dick, after the servants had returned to their work and Dick and Dolly were left alone with their new possession. "How shall we fix it up, Dollums?"

Dolly considered. She was more ingenious than Dick in arranging dramatic effects, and at last she said:

"I think we'll just have her seated in a corner of the veranda, and then, when the aunties come home, I'll tell them there's a lady waiting to see them."

"Yes, that'll be fine; let's fix her now."

So Lady Eliza Dusenbury was gracefully seated in a piazza chair. Upon her knees lay an open magazine, held in place with one slender pink hand.

"Those hands give her away, Dolly," said Dick. "They don't look a bit real."

"Neither they don't," agreed Dolly; "I'll get gloves."

She ran upstairs and down again, bringing a pair of light kid gloves from Aunt Rachel's

room, which she succeeded in getting on the Lady Eliza's hands.

"That's a heap better," said Dick; "now, with the veil, and as its getting sort of darkish, I don't see how they'll suspect at all."

Quietly the Lady Eliza sat waiting. Not quite so quietly, Dick and Dolly sat on the top step of the veranda, waiting also, and at last Michael, who had gone after the Dana ladies, drove them up to the steps.

He had been charged by the twins not to mention their new acquisition, so, of course, had not done so.

Dick and Dolly met their aunts, with a smiling welcome, and then Dolly said:

"There's a lady to see you, Aunt Rachel; as you weren't home when she came, she sat down, over there to wait."

In her pleasant, dignified way, Miss Rachel crossed the veranda, followed by Miss Abbie.

Though the ladies had slightly relaxed their "society" manner when greeting the twins, they instantly assumed it again as they went to meet their visitor.

"Good-afternoon," said Miss Rachel as she neared the lady reading the magazine.

But the stranger did not look up, and Miss Rachel assumed she had not heard.

"How do you do?" she said, in louder tones, and held out her hand.

Miss Abbie also approached, and said "Good-afternoon," and extended her hand, but apparently the visitor had no intention of stopping her reading.

With no thought other than that the lady was deaf or exceedingly preoccupied, Miss Rachel stepped nearer, and said very loudly:

"Good-afternoon!"

Still no response, and now Miss Rachel became frightened.

"She has had a stroke or something," she exclaimed, and, stooping, she peered into the stranger's face.

"Oh, Abbie! her cheek is hurt! Somebody has struck her, or thrown a stone at her. How dreadful!"

Miss Abbie fluttered about.

"Oh, Rachel! How awful! What shall we do? Call for help, but don't let the children come here."

"Yes, let us come," cried Dick, as he and Dolly danced toward the group. "Let us come, she's our friend; she's Lady Eliza Dusenbury."

"What do you mean?" cried Miss Rachel. "This lady has been hurt somehow. Go and call Hannah. Or perhaps we had better send Michael for a doctor."

"No, don't, Aunt Rachel," said Dolly, who was now shrieking with laughter. "Lady Eliza isn't much hurt. But isn't she a dear!"

Dolly threw her arms round the strange lady's neck, and patted the injured cheek gently. Magazine and shopping bag slid to the floor, but otherwise, the stranger made no motion.

"Dolly, behave yourself!" cried Aunt Abbie. "What do you mean by such actions? Let the poor lady be! Oh, what shall we do, Rachel?"

But Aunt Rachel had begun to see daylight. The irrepressible mirth of the two children told her that there was a joke somewhere, and then, as she recognised her own dress and hat, she suspected the truth.

"H'm," she said; "suppose we take off the poor lady's veil, and see how much she is hurt."

"Suppose we do," said Dolly, and she obligingly assisted her aunt to remove the veil from Lady Eliza's beautiful, but scarred face.

"Well!" she exclaimed as she saw the glass eyes and the pink wax face, "what *have* you two been up to, now?"

As for Aunt Abbie, she sank down on a nearby chair, helpless with laughter.

Then Aunt Rachel followed her example, and Dick and Dolly danced round the three seated figures, while they screamed themselves hoarse with glee.

They moved Lady Eliza's arms into threatening and despairing poses, each more ridiculous than the other.

They took off her hat, and breaking bunches of wistaria from the veranda vine, they wreathed her golden mop of hair with them.

They took Aunt Rachel's eyeglasses from the little gold hook on her bodice, and perched them on Lady Eliza's nose, sticking a pin in the wax to hold them on. And at each ridiculous demonstration the two aunts would become convulsed with laughter.

"Isn't she lovely!" said Dolly, at last, as she hung around Aunt Rachel's neck, and watched Dick tie the string of a red balloon to Lady Eliza's hand, just so that the balloon kept thumping her in the face.

"She is beautiful," agreed Aunt Rachel, with a shade of mental reservation in her tones. "Where did you get her, and why did you take my newest gown to play with?"

"I didn't know it was your newest gown!" said Dolly, regretfully; but Aunt Rachel told her not to mind, they would take it off, and there were several older ones that would do equally well for Lady Eliza.

The story of the auction was told, and the aunts had another season of mirth over the ridiculous bidding.

"All right," said Aunt Rachel, after the story was finished, "but never bid on anything unless you have enough money to pay for it."

"We didn't," said Dick; "we counted our money first. And truly, this was the only thing in the whole auction we wanted."

"Well, I'm glad you have her. I think you can have good fun with such a big doll. Tomorrow I'll find you some clothes."

Aunt Rachel was as good as her word, and next day she went to the attic and found several discarded costumes of her own and Aunt Abbie's that were fine for Eliza. Hats and bonnets, capes and shawls, a parasol and a feather boa,—indeed the Lady Eliza soon had a complete and even luxurious wardrobe.

Aunt Abbie touched up the injured cheek with some water-colour paints, and then the injury scarcely showed at all.

That afternoon the twins prepared to spring the joke on Pinkie and Jack. They expected them both to come over and play, and beforehand they got the Lady Eliza ready. The arbour in the playground was now nearly covered with vines, and formed a well-shaded tent.

In here, at a table, they placed Eliza, her hands meekly in her lap, and her face downcast. She wore a black-and-white checked suit, and a black hat and veil. Her hands were ungloved, but were filled with flowers, which concealed the artificial-looking finger-tips.

Having arranged her exactly to their liking, the twins sat on the veranda steps, waiting for their friends. Pinkie came first, and Jack came very soon after.

"Let's go out to the playground," said Dick, casually.

"All right," agreed Jack. "It's too hot for tag; let's play hide and seek."

They all sauntered toward the playground, and as they nearly reached it, Jack said:

"Why, there's a lady in there!"

"A lady?" said Dick, looking surprised. "What are you talking about?"

"There is," repeated Jack; "see."

They all peeped through the vines, and sure enough, a lady was seated at the table. Her hands were full of flowers, but she appeared dejected, and her head drooped a little.

"It isn't either of the aunties," whispered Dolly, "they're in the house."

"Who is it then?" Jack whispered back, and Pinkie said, "Don't let's go in, I'm afraid."

"Afraid of a lady!" said Dick. "Pooh, I'm not. Maybe it's your mother, Pinkie."

"No, it isn't," she replied. "Mother's at home. Maybe it's Hannah."

"What would Hannah be here for?" said Dolly. "Let's go in and see who it is."

"All right," said Dick, and he stepped inside. "She won't speak to me," he said, stepping out again. "You go in, Jack."

Not wishing to be thought cowardly, Jack stepped into the arbour, and in his politest tones, said:

"How do you do, ma'am?"

But the lady did not move, and just looked at Jack with big blue eyes, that stared through her black veil.

"She's a funny lady," said Jack, rather bewildered. "She won't speak, and she just stares at me."

"You try, Pinkie," said Dolly.

So Pinkie went up to the lady, and in her sweet little voice said:

"What's the matter, lady?"

She, too, received only a blue-eyed stare, and no word of reply.

"Perhaps she's asleep," said Dick.

"No, her eyes are wide open," said Jack, his own eyes also wide open in surprise.

"Then she must have fainted," said Dick; "we must try to bring her to."

He gave the lady a pat on the shoulder, but still she didn't stir.

"Hit her harder," said Dolly. "Don't hurt her, you know, but you have to shake people to make 'em come out of a faint."

Dick thumped her on the back, and slyly bent her arm up until she seemed to be shaking her fist at them. The flowers tumbled to the floor, and her other arm flew up above her head.

"Oh!" cried Pinkie, and ran farther away from the now belligerent-looking lady.

"Oh!" cried Jack, catching on. Then, screaming with laughter, he seized the lady's hand shook it, crying, "How do you do, ma'am! How *do* you do? I'm *so* glad to meet you!"

Pinkie was still mystified, so Dolly ushered her up to the lady, saying, "Miss Pinkie Middleton 'low me to make you 'quainted with Lady Eliza Dusenbury!"

Dick had taken off Eliza's veil, and Pinkie at last realised what sort of lady she was meeting.

"Oh, Dolly," she cried, "where did you get her? Isn't it fun! I think she's fine!"

"She's great!" declared Jack. "You fooled me good, old Mr. Dick Dana! What's her name, did you say?"

"Lady Eliza Dusenbury," said Dick, "but we call her Eliza, if we want to. Let's take her for a ride."

They got the little express wagon that Dick and Dolly used to cart their plants or flower-pots around the gardens in, and lifted Eliza in.

"She'll have to stand up," said Dolly, "because she can't sit down."

"All right," said Jack, "we'll tie her so she won't upset."

They fastened her iron pedestal, which served her instead of feet, firmly to the wagon, and

then proceeded to deck both vehicle and passenger with flowers, till it looked like a float in a parade.

Dolly and Pinkie made a gilt paper crown, and wound gilt paper around a long rod for a sceptre.

“Oh, let’s make her Queen of the Fairies!” cried Pinkie.

So the dress Eliza had on was changed for a white one. This was decked with ribbons and garlands of flowers. Crown and wand were put in place, and then the whole four combined their ingenuity to invent wings. At last they were cut from thin pasteboard, and covered all over with fringed white tissue paper. This fringe, about an inch wide, and cut fine, was quickly made, and when pasted on in close rows, gave a lovely fluffy appearance to the wings.

A gauzy white veil, spangled with gilt paper stars, floated down from the crown, and the Queen of the Fairies presented a most delectable appearance.

The express wagon was not good enough for this dream of beauty, so it was made into a float, by placing some boards on top of it. This top was neatly covered with a sheet and decked with flowers.

Then the Queen of the Fairies was raised to her triumphal car, and her four willing subjects drew her about.

Long reins were made by cutting strips of white muslin, and these were attached to four prancing little steeds, while the Queen held the ends in her waxen hands. The cortège made a tour of the grounds, and drew up finally at the house to exhibit their peerless Lady Eliza to the aunties, who expressed heartfelt admiration.

“It’s the best plaything ever,” declared Jack, as he and Pinkie went home. “We’ll be over tomorrow to play some more.”

CHAPTER XII

OBEYING ORDERS

“Children,” said Aunt Rachel, one afternoon, as dressed in their best calling costumes, she and Aunt Abbie were about to enter the carriage, “we are going to make some calls, and about five o’clock I want you to meet us at Mrs. Hampton’s, and we will all come home together.”

“Oh, Auntie Rachel,” said Dolly, “I don’t want to go calling to-day. I want to play.”

“I know it, dearie, and so I’ve let you off from most of the calls we’re making. But I especially want you to be with me at Mrs. Hampton’s, so you can play till half-past four, and then get dressed and meet us there at five.”

“All right, Auntie,” said Dolly, who was a sunny-tempered little girl, after all. “What shall I wear?”

“Put on your new white piqué, and Dick, wear your light-grey suit. Now, be sure, children,—be there promptly by five.”

“Yes’m; and if you’re not there shall we wait for you?”

“Yes,” said Aunt Abbie, “wait until we come, no matter what time it is. But we’ll be there about five.”

The aunts drove away and the twins played out in the garden until it was time to dress.

They started off, looking very demure with their clean clothes and freshly-brushed hair.

“I don’t want to go a bit,” said Dolly, with a little sigh, as she walked along.

“Neither do I,” replied Dick, “but we have to go, so there’s no use making a fuss about it. Where does she live, anyway?”

“Why, I don’t know; I thought Auntie told you.”

“No, she didn’t, but I know it can’t be far, because she said we could get there in ten minutes. Here’s old Abe, let’s ask him.”

The twins stopped an old man who was going by in his cart, and who was a well-known character in the town.

“Hello, Abe,” said Dick. “Do you know where Mrs. Hampton lives?”

“Sure, my boy. I just came from there, havin’ been doin’ some cartin’ for her. You see that red-brick house, over beyond those trees?”

“Yes.”

“Well, it’s the next one beyond,—a white one. You go over that way, and anybody’ll direct you.”

“All right; thank you, Abe,” and the old man drove on, while the twins followed the direction he had given them.

“I’d like to skip,” said Dolly, “but it makes our shoes all dusty.”

“No, we mustn’t do that,” agreed Dick. “Aunt Rachel would have a cat-fit if we weren’t spick and span when we get there.”

So they walked on sedately, only pausing now and then to pick a flower, or look at a bird on a branch.

They inquired once more, in order to be sure, and then turned in at Mrs. Hampton’s gate. A fine fountain was playing in the front yard, and the twins crossed the lawn to see if there were any fish in it. There weren’t, but the splash of the cool water was very attractive.

"I'll dare you to stick your foot in," said Dick, suddenly.

They stood on the very brink of the fountain basin, and so impossible was it for either twin to refuse a "dare," that Dolly's immaculate white shoe and stocking went flash into the water and out again before she realised what she had done.

"Oh, Dick!" she exclaimed; "you made me do that! What will Aunt Rachel say?"

"Too bad, Dollums," said Dick, greatly disturbed at his own part in the mischief. "I didn't think what I was saying."

"And I didn't think what I was doing! I dare you to stick *your* foot in!"

Partly because of the dare, and partly because he was quite willing to share his sister's fate, Dick hastily thrust his own neat black shoe and stocking in the water.

"There!" he said, as half proudly he drew it out again. "Now we're even!"

"Yes; but how can we go into Mrs. Hampton's this way?"

"Perhaps they won't notice. Mine doesn't feel very wet, does yours?"

"Sopping! and they'll drip all over her carpet."

"Let's wipe them on the grass."

But the green grass did not improve the appearance of Dolly's white shoe, though Dick's black one didn't show the effects of the bath so plainly.

"Come on, Dolly, we may as well face the music."

They went on toward the house, and the dust of the footpath settled on Dick's wet shoe and stocking until he was quite as untidy looking as his sister.

"Wow! isn't it soppy!" he exclaimed as the water in his shoe oozed and splattered out.

"Horrid! I don't see why we did it!"

"Well, keep up a brave face, maybe the parlour will be sort of dark and they won't notice."

They rang the bell, and a maid opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Hampton in?" said Dolly, in her sweetest tones.

"Yes; walk in the drawing-room. What names?"

"Miss Dana and Mr. Dana," said Dolly, and was about to explain that they had come to meet their aunts, when the maid disappeared.

She returned to say that Mrs. Hampton would appear presently, and for them to wait.

"Course we'll wait," said Dick to Dolly, as the maid again left them. "The aunties aren't here on time, after all. P'raps our feet'll dry before they come."

"I wish there was a fire. I'm dripping on this pretty light carpet. Dick, let's go out in the kitchen or some place, and find a fire."

"All right, come on."

They left the drawing-room, and as they crossed the hall they saw a bright wood fire in a room across the hall, evidently the library. So they went in, and drawing up two big chairs, they sat down and held their two wet feet to the crackling blaze.

"This is gay," said Dick, leaning back in his chair with a sigh of satisfaction. "We'll be all dry in a few minutes, Doll."

"Yes; but I wish Aunt Rachel would come before Mrs. Hampton comes down. I don't know her. Do you?"

"Nope; never saw her. But the aunties are bound to be here soon. It's quarter-past five, now."

"What *are* you children doing?" said a voice behind them, and Dick and Dolly jumped from their chairs, and saw a lady coming toward them. She was a very pretty lady, in a trailing silk house gown, and lots of frizzy light hair.

Dolly thought she looked a little like Lady Eliza, and not at all like any of Aunt Rachel's other friends.

"How do you do?" said Dolly, making her curtsy prettily, while Dick bobbed his head.

"How do you do?" returned Mrs. Hampton, "but who are you?"

"We're Dolly and Dick Dana," said Dick, "and our aunties said for us to meet them here at five o'clock. But they don't seem to be here yet."

"No; they're not. Are your aunties Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie Dana?"

"Yes'm; and they said they would call here this afternoon."

"And they told us if they weren't here to wait till they came," said Dolly.

"Yes?" said Mrs. Hampton, looking at her quizzically. "And why are you sitting almost into the fire? It's a warm day."

"Yes," said Dolly, "but you see, we stepped into the fountain as we came along, and so we're just drying our feet."

"That's a very good idea," and Mrs. Hampton's smiling eyes were as pleasant as if stepping into fountains was quite usual for her guests. "And so your aunts are coming to call on me?"

"Yes, at five o'clock. But they seem to be late, so, if you please, we'll wait for them."

They waited until half-past five, and then until quarter of six, and still the Dana ladies didn't come. The twins grew very impatient, for it was most irksome to have to sit and talk polite conversation with a grown-up lady.

Mrs. Hampton asked so many questions too. Very impertinent questions they seemed to Dick, though he answered to the best of his ability.

Mrs. Hampton was smiling and pleasant, and seemed interested in hearing about the Dana establishment, but still Dick and Dolly felt uncomfortable, and wished their aunts would come.

At six o'clock Mrs. Hampton said she felt sure the aunts had changed their plans, and were not coming, and she delicately hinted that she would send the twins home.

"No," said Dick, positively; "we must stay here till they come. Aunt Abbie said to wait, no matter what time it was. And, besides, if they have changed their plans, and are not coming here, they'd send Michael for us, anyway."

Dolly agreed to this, and the two little martyrs sat for another half-hour.

"Well, if you stay any longer, you must stay to dinner," said Mrs. Hampton at last. "Do you sit up to dinner at home?"

"We have supper at night," said Dolly, and her lip quivered a little, for she was beginning to feel anxious about her aunts.

"Well, I have dinner at night,—at eight o'clock."

"At eight o'clock!" exclaimed Dolly. "Don't you get awfully hungry before that time?"

"No, I don't," said Mrs. Hampton, smiling; "but I'm sure you chickabiddies will. So suppose I give you a nice little supper up in my sitting-room, and excuse you from dinner? I have guests coming, and it isn't exactly a children's party, you see."

"But we're not going to stay here all night!" exclaimed Dolly in dismay.

"It looks that way to me," said Mrs. Hampton. "I offered to send you home, and you said no. Now I feel sure your aunts won't come,—it's too late for them, and if you're bound to wait for them, I can offer you supper and pleasant sleeping rooms,—but I can't invite you to dinner."

The twins were uncertain what to do. But after all, they had no choice. Aunt Rachel had told them to wait until she came, and Aunt Rachel's orders were always to be obeyed. To be sure something might have happened to prevent the aunties from carrying out their plan of

calling on Mrs. Hampton, but even so, they would have sent for the children. And if they had gone home, they would surely send Michael over for them at once. It wasn't as if the aunties didn't know where they were. They had sent them to Mrs. Hampton's, and told them to wait there. So they waited.

They thought Mrs. Hampton seemed a little annoyed because they waited. But as Dick said to Dolly, "I'm not going to disobey Aunt Rachel for another lady. But all the same, Dollums, I do want to go home."

"So do I," said Dolly, "I think it's horrid here."

It wasn't really horrid at all, but to be unwelcome guests in a strange house is not especially pleasant, no matter how pretty the house may be.

The twins had been taken up to Mrs. Hampton's sitting-room, and in charge of a maid, had been served with a delightful little supper. Bread and milk, jam, fresh strawberries, and dear little cakes, followed by ice cream, made a goodly feast indeed. After it, their spirits rose a little, and they ate their ice cream with smiling faces.

"I think the aunties decided to come this evening instead of afternoon," said Dick, unable to think of any other explanation.

"They never do make calls in the evening but perhaps that's it," said Dolly, doubtfully. "I hear people coming in, Dick, let's go and look over the banisters."

Carrying their ice cream plates with them the twins stepped out into the hall and looked over the banisters on the scene below.

It was a fascinating glow of lights and flowers and ladies and gentlemen in evening dress, for the dinner guests had come, and were standing about, engaged in conversation.

Dolly was enchanted with the grand ladies, with jewels in their hair, and with low-necked gowns, and Dick, too, leaned over the banister to see the gay scene. So absorbed were they that they did not heed their melting ice cream, and, almost at the same moment, the soft, cold mass slid from each tipped-up plate, on the heads and shoulders of the ladies and gentlemen below.

Such a shriek of dismay as arose brought Dick and Dolly to a realisation of what they had done, and in an agony of mortification they fled back to the sitting-room.

Here Mrs. Hampton found them, their heads buried in sofa pillows, and crying in muffled paroxysms.

"You must go home," she said, and her cold, hard tones were more of a reproof than any words could have been. "My coachman will take you, and I wish you to go at once."

"We wish to go, Mrs. Hampton," said Dolly, striving to choke back her tears while she made some sort of apology. "We're very sorry we came, and we're 'ceeding sorry we spilled the ice cream. It was very good."

This sounded as if Dolly merely regretted the loss of the dainty, but it was not so. She meant to compliment the supper that had been given them, but, what with their worry over Aunt Rachel's absence, their own homesickness, and the awful accident of the ice cream, both children were completely upset.

"Please forgive us," said Dick, holding out his little hand. "We've had a lovely time,—and,—and we hope you'll come to see us."

"I can't make you out!" said Mrs. Hampton, looking at the children in perplexity. "I thought you threw down that ice cream purposely."

"Oh, no!" cried both twins at once, and Dolly went on eagerly: "you see, we never saw low-necked ladies and gentlemen at a party before; and we were so awfully interested, we leaned

over to see better, and I s'pose the gas-lights heated up our ice cream and melted it, and it just slipped off the plates."

"We ought to have held the plates more level," said Dick, thoughtfully; "I'm sorry we didn't."

"I'm sorry, too, for you mortified me terribly and annoyed my guests, which was worse."

"It's terrible!" said Dolly, with a sigh. "I don't see how you *can* forgive us."

"I couldn't if you weren't such a sweet little culprit," said Mrs. Hampton, smiling, and catching Dolly in her arms and kissing her. Then she kissed Dick too, and, still smiling, she hurried away.

The maid found the children's hats, and hurried them down the back stairs, where the coachman was waiting for them. Evidently the servants were not as forgiving as Mrs. Hampton, for Dick and Dolly were fairly hustled into the carriage, the door was banged shut, and they were rapidly driven homeward.

At Dana Dene, they were met on the threshold by two very frightened-looking ladies, and while Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie each clasped a twin in her arms, the Hampton carriage drove away.

"You *dear* babies! where have you been?" cried Aunt Abbie, while Aunt Rachel squeezed Dick with an affection too deep for words.

"Where have we been?" cried Dick, in amazement. "Why, we've been at Mrs. Hampton's, where you told us to go, and wait for you. We've been waiting there ever since five o'clock!"

"Why, Dickie, dear," expostulated Miss Rachel, "we went to Mrs. Hampton's at five o'clock, and waited there for you until nearly six! Then we came home, and ever since we've been nearly frantic because we didn't know where you were. Michael and Pat have been out hunting with lanterns."

"But, Auntie, dear," said Dolly, "we *did* go to Mrs. Hampton's, and after we waited and waited, and you didn't come, she gave us supper in her sitting-room, 'cause she had a dinner party in the dining-room, and the ladies had on beautiful frocks, all lacy and low-necked, and we spilled ice cream on 'em!"

"What!"

"Yes'm; we didn't mean to, you know, but it melted."

"Dolly, what *are* you talking about? Mrs. Hampton is not having a dinner party this evening. I just left there at six o'clock, so I know."

"Well, *our* Mrs. Hampton is," said Dick. "Are there two Mrs. Hamptons in Heatherton, auntie?"

"No, of course there aren't! I wonder where you *have* been!"

"Well, she *is* Mrs. Hampton, we called her that, and so did the maid. It's a beautiful house, —with a great big open round in the hall, where you can look down,—and a fountain outside."

Miss Rachel sent for Michael.

"Michael," said she, "where do you suppose these children have been? Whose carriage brought them home?"

"I don't know, Miss Rachel. It's a new turnout in Heatherton. All swell, jingly harness and livery, an' the like o' that."

"Dolly says they live in a big white house with a fountain in front."

"Arrah, thin, it's the new people as is afther takin' the Van Zandt place. A widdy lady of great forchin, I'm towld; an' be the same token, I do belave they said her name was Hampden, or somethin' like that."

CHAPTER XIII

AUNT NINE

Of course that was the explanation. Mrs. Hampden was a wealthy young widow who had just come to Heatherton to live. The Dana ladies did not know her, and probably never would have known her had it not been for the twins' escapade.

For lively little Mrs. Hampden belonged to a gay, modern set that had little in common with the Dana ladies' older and more conservative circle of friends. Also, she was not at all like the Mrs. Hampton on whom Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie were calling, and where the twins were expected to meet them.

But as the real fault lay at the aunties' door, inasmuch as they had not given the twins sufficiently explicit directions, it did not seem fair to blame Dick and Dolly.

And after hearing the story the twins told, Miss Rachel and Miss Abbie saw that it was their duty to call on Mrs. Hampden, and apologise for the trouble the children had made for her.

This was not a pleasant or an easy thing to do, but as it turned out, Mrs. Hampden was so flattered at having the Dana ladies call on her that she willingly forgave the children's escapade, and begged that they might be allowed to come to see her again.

This was not promised, for Miss Rachel Dana of Dana Dene was very careful about making new acquaintances, and considered her present visiting list quite long enough. The children themselves had no wish to go again to the house where they had met with such an untoward accident, and so the incident was closed, and the aunts trusted that Mrs. Hampden would not return their call.

"But I do think," said Aunt Abbie, as they discussed the matter at home, "that you two children ought to be reprov'd for spilling that ice cream."

"I think so, too," said Dick, cheerfully, "but 'course you know, auntie, that we didn't mean to do it."

"Certainly," said Aunt Abbie, with some asperity, "I don't suppose you poured it down on the people purposely. But you are quite old enough to know better than to walk about with saucers of food in your hands."

"So we are!" said Dolly, as if surprised at the fact. "Aunt Abbie, I do believe we're 'ceedingly bad children!"

"Not exactly that," said Aunt Abbie, smiling in spite of herself, "but you are exceedingly thoughtless, and I want you to strive to correct that fault."

"Yes'm," said Dick, earnestly, "we'll strive like fury. Honest, we will, Aunt Abbie. Won't we, Dolly?"

"Yes, indeedy!" agreed Dolly, with a very affirmative wagging of her head. "And now, if you're all through scolding, Aunt Abbie, may we kiss you?"

Then, without waiting for the requested permission, both children tumbled themselves upon Miss Abbie, and gave her the soft answer that turneth away wrath. For who could continue to reprove two affectionate small persons, whose chubby arms flew about in wild caresses, and whose insistent kisses fell just wherever they happened to land? But Miss Abbie Dana was determined to instil some sense of decorum into her young charges, so when released from their embraces, she began again:

"Now that's another thing, children; I want you to love me, of course. But it seems to me

you needn't be so—so——”

“Rampageous?” volunteered Dick. “That’s what Pat says we are.”

“We can’t help it, auntie,” said Dolly, fixing her big brown eyes solemnly on her aunt. “You see, we’re so ’thusiastic that when we love anybody we love ’em fearful! And we just ’dore you and Aunt Rachel. Don’t we, Dick?”

“Well, I guess!” and then Miss Abbie had to stand another series of pats and kisses, which, in view of the recent conversation, the twins made a little less boisterous.

“Well, you’re dear little twinsies,” said Aunt Abbie, as at last they ran away.

“And,” she added to herself, “I think I can make them improve their manners by just keeping at it.”

Poor Miss Abbie wanted to bring the children up rightly, but the work was so new to her she didn’t know exactly how to conduct it.

As for Miss Rachel, she vibrated between over-indulgence and over-severity, an occasion of one being conscientiously followed by the other.

So the twins nearly always had their own sweet way, and as, though sometimes thoughtless, they were not mischievous children, Dana Dene was brighter and happier for their presence.

One Monday the aunties were getting ready for the Reading Circle, which was to meet at Dana Dene in the afternoon. It was very inconvenient for all the members that the club should meet on washdays, but as it always had done so, of course that couldn’t be changed.

Some ladies had the washing put off till Tuesday, but life at Dana Dene was far too methodical for that.

So when the club was expected, Delia tried to get her wash all hung out by noon, and so be ready to help in the afternoon. For, though the club didn’t assemble until three o’clock, and tea was served at five, there was much to be done in the way of prinking up the house for the occasion. The twins were allowed to help, and Dolly dusted, and brought water for the flower vases, and helped adjust fresh pillow-shams and bureau covers, until Aunt Rachel declared she didn’t know how she ever got ready for Reading Circle without Dolly’s help. And Dick’s as well; for he cut flowers, and ran lots of errands, and did lots of useful things.

And when, at about eleven o’clock, he saw the telegram boy coming with a yellow envelope, he took it and flew to Aunt Rachel with it faster than any one else could have done.

“For gracious goodness’ sake!” exclaimed Miss Rachel as she read it; “Aunt Nine is coming to dinner to-day!”

“To-day!” said Miss Abbie in a tone positively tragic, as she sank down in a big chair. “Why, she can’t, Rachel! It’s after eleven now, and the Reading Circle coming at three, and nothing but cold beef for dinner!”

“It doesn’t matter whether she can or not; she’s coming,” and Miss Rachel, who had turned fairly white with dismay, sat down opposite her sister.

“Who’s Aunt Nine? What a funny name!” cried Dick, dancing around in excited curiosity.

Dolly picked up the telegram, which had fluttered to the floor.

“‘Will arrive at twelve-thirty,’” she read; “‘meet me at the station.’”

“Why, it’s signed ‘P. Dana,’” said Dick. “How can P. Dana be Aunt Nine? How can it, Aunt Abbie?” He squeezed into the big chair beside Miss Abbie, and patted her cheek to attract her attention. “How can it? How does P. stand for Nine? Or do you mean nine aunts are coming? Oh, Doll, wouldn’t that be fun?”

“Tell me,” urged Dolly, squeezing herself into Aunt Rachel’s lap, “tell me first, auntie, ’fore

Dick knows. Quick, tell me! Who's Aunt Nine? What does it mean?"

"Oh, Dolly, for mercy's sake don't bother me now! She's Aunt Penninah, your great-aunt, of course. We always call her Aunt Nine. And she's the most particular, fussy, pernicketty old lady in the world!"

"Oh, she's dreadful!" sighed Aunt Abbie. "We always spend weeks getting ready for her. She never came so unexpectedly before."

"But the house is all in order," suggested Dolly, anxious to be comforting.

"Yes, for the Reading Circle. But not for Aunt Penninah. She looks into every cupboard and storeroom, and, besides, we've nothing for dinner."

"I'll go get something," offered Dick. "What do you want?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know!" groaned Miss Rachel. "Go and send Hannah here. And it's wash-day, too! And the Reading Club! Oh, what can we do?"

But after the first surprise and bewilderment were over, the Dana ladies rose to the occasion, and did the best they could.

Michael was sent to town for supplies, Hannah was instructed to set the table with special elaboration, and Aunt Abbie herself went into the kitchen and whisked up a pudding.

Delia was still at her washing, and Pat was putting finishing touches to the lawn and flower-beds so they could not be disturbed.

The twins flew about in earnest endeavours to help, but after their breaking a cut-glass vase, and upsetting a small table of bric-à-brac, Aunt Rachel lost patience.

"Dick and Dolly," she said, "you go upstairs and stay either in your own rooms or in your playroom until dinner is served at one o'clock! Do you understand? No; I'm not scolding, but I'm so put about that you two simply drive me distracted! Now obey me exactly, for that's all you can do to help. Come down to the library at five minutes to one,—not a minute before. And see that you're spandy clean, and very nicely dressed. Put on your blue lawn, Dolly, and tie your hair ribbons carefully."

"Yes'm; Dick'll tie 'em for me. He does it just lovely."

Subdued by Aunt Rachel's desperate manner, the twins crept away, resolved to be very good, and do exactly as they were told.

"It isn't twelve yet," said Dick; "no use dressing now. We'd only get all rumped up. Let's go up in the playroom."

So up they went, and began to play with Lady Eliza.

"Hello, 'Liza!" cried Dick, shaking her wax hand cordially. "I haven't seen you in some time. Are you well?"

"Pretty well," said Dolly in a squeaky voice. It was part of their play that, whenever either twin spoke to Lady Eliza, the other twin was to answer for her.

"Pretty well. But I'm tired of this old frock,—I want a change."

"All right," said Dick; "we'll fix you up. Let's rig her up gay, Doll, and we'll show her off to Aunt Nine."

"All right," and Dolly flew to the trunk that contained Lady Eliza's wardrobe.

They selected an old-fashioned blue silk dress that Aunt Rachel had given them, and proceeded to array Eliza in it. Then Dolly dressed her hair. She loved to do this, for Eliza's hair was very profuse, if not of very fine texture, and soon Dolly had built a fine array of puffs and curls, with a fancy ornament of blue and silver tucked in at the side.

Then, desiring to make her very grand, Dolly put a necklace of her own round Eliza's neck, and added several long strings of beads, hung with various trinkets.

"How do I look?" said Dolly in the squeaky voice that always represented Lady Eliza's talking.

"You look gay," said Dick. "Perhaps this afternoon you'll meet a grand lady, Miss Nine Dana. I hope you'll behave properly."

"Oh, I'll behave lovely," squeaked Eliza, and then the twins ran away to dress for dinner. By quarter of one they were all ready.

Dolly looked very sweet and demure in her frilly blue lawn, and her beautiful hair was tied with a big white bow which Dick had skilfully arranged. By practice his deft little fingers had conquered the science of tying bows, so Dolly's hair ribbons were always marvels of correct proportions.

They had promised not to go to the library until five minutes of one, and the ten minutes intervening seemed interminable. They drifted back to the playroom to say good-by to Eliza, when Dick had an inspiration.

"Let's take her down," he said, "and put her in the dining-room to greet Aunt Nine when we all go out to dinner."

"Let's!" cried Dolly, and in a jiffy they were carrying the Lady Eliza Dusenbury silently down the back stairs. By good luck they didn't encounter Hannah or the aunties, and they reached the dining-room in safety.

"Where shall we stand her?" said Dick. "In the bay window?"

"No," said Dolly. "Let's sit her at the table."

"She won't sit."

"Well, we'll sort of slide her under; if we put her in Aunt Rachel's big chair she'll be all right."

They propped Eliza into the chair, and though she seemed to be falling backward in a swoon, her bright eyes and pink cheeks betokened good health. Her elaborate costume looked fine at the prettily set table, and Dick moved her arms about until they seemed extended in welcome.

"That's fine!" said Dolly, nodding admiringly at the tableau.

"This is finer!" cried Dick, and taking the large carving-knife from the table, he thrust it into Eliza's outstretched hand. This was easily done by sticking the knife handle partly up her long tight sleeve, and her effect, as she brandished the glittering steel, was now ferocious.

"Gay!" cried Dolly; "won't they be s'prised! Come on, Dick, it's five minutes to one."

The twins, hand in hand, went into the library, and with their best curtseys were presented to Aunt Penninah.

"These are the children, Aunt Nine," said Miss Rachel, and Dick and Dolly saw, sitting in a big armchair, the most imposing-looking personage they had ever met.

Miss Penninah Dana was a large and very tall woman, with white hair, and large, piercing black eyes that seemed to see everything.

"H'm; twins, are you?" she said, looking at them over her eyeglasses. "You seem very demure. Are you always so quiet?"

Dick rolled his eyes toward Aunt Rachel.

"Shall we show her?" he whispered, quite ready to pounce on the new aunt if desired.

"Mercy, no!" said Miss Rachel. "Do behave, if you can."

"Well," said Dick, answering Aunt Nine's question, "we're *not* always so quiet. But to-day we're trying to be good because you're here, and the Reading Circle is coming."

"But sometimes we're good when there isn't company, too," put in Dolly, not wanting to be

misjudged.

“I’m surprised at that!” said Aunt Nine, but there was a merry gleam in her eye, and somehow the twins began to think they were going to like her in spite of her majestic appearance.

Then dinner was announced, and, as the guest arose, the children were impressed afresh with her evident importance.

She walked like a duchess, and seemed to expect everybody to dance attendance upon her.

Aunt Rachel picked up her handkerchief, and Aunt Abbie her vinaigrette, for she dropped them both as she rose.

The twins, greatly interested, walked behind, and they all started toward the dining-room.

As they neared the door, the hostesses stepped back and Aunt Penninah stalked stiffly into the room.

Perhaps it was not to be wondered at, for the figure at the table was certainly startling to look at, and the glittering carving knife was aimed straight at her, but Aunt Penninah threw up both her hands, gave a fearful shriek, and fainted dead away!

CHAPTER XIV

A CORONATION

“Oh, Aunt Nine, what *is* the matter?” cried Miss Rachel, bending over her, while Miss Abbie fluttered around distractedly.

They had not yet seen Lady Eliza, as they were so engrossed with their stricken guest.

Nor did it occur to Dick and Dolly, at first, that it was their beloved Eliza that had caused the trouble.

Aunt Penninah began to revive, as Miss Rachel sprinkled water in her face, and Miss Abbie held her strong smelling-salts to her nose.

“Who is it?” she asked, faintly, sitting up on the floor, and pointing to the dangerous-looking person with the carving knife.

“Oh,” cried Dolly, “if she wasn’t scared at Lady Eliza! Why, that’s nobody, Aunt Nine! Only just a wax doll.”

“Take that thing away!” said Miss Rachel, sternly, as she realised what had happened.

Dick and Dolly fairly jumped. Aunt Rachel had never spoken to them in that tone before, and they suddenly realised that it had been naughty to put Eliza at the table, though they had thought it only a joke. Silently, the twins began to lift Eliza from her chair, when Aunt Nine screamed out:

“Come away, children! You’ll be killed! Oh, Rachel, who is she?”

“Nobody, Aunt Nine. It’s a doll, a wax dummy that belongs to the children. They put her there for fun, I suppose.”

“Fun!” roared Aunt Penninah, glaring at the twins. “Do you call it *fun* to frighten me out of my senses?”

As her speech and manner nearly frightened the twins out of *their* senses, they were pretty nearly even, but apparently the old lady was waiting for an answer.

“We *thought* it would be fun,” said Dolly, truthfully. “You see, we didn’t know how easily you scared.”

“Easily scared, indeed! Who wouldn’t be scared to come into a room and find a strange woman brandishing a carving knife in my very face! A nice pair of children you are! Leave the room at once,—or else I shall!”

Dick and Dolly were bewildered by this tornado of wrath, and began to edge toward the hall door, keeping out of reach of the irate lady.

But Miss Rachel, though deeply mortified and seriously annoyed at the twins’ mischief, was a strong stickler for justice, and she well knew, Dick and Dolly had meant only a harmless joke.

“Now, Aunt Nine,” she said; “don’t take this so seriously. The children meant no harm, they wanted to amuse you; and had it not been for the carving knife, I daresay you would have found the Lady Eliza very funny indeed.”

“Funny! that horrible thing with her staring eyes! Take her away so I can eat my dinner!”

At a gesture from Aunt Abbie, Hannah and Dick removed the offending Eliza, and returned the carving knife to the sideboard. As Eliza was a great friend of both Hannah and Delia, she was allowed to stand in the butler’s pantry all through dinner time.

“Well, what do you say, Aunt Nine?” said Aunt Abbie, “may the twins sit at table, or would

you rather have them sent from the room?"

"Oh, let them stay," said the old lady, not very graciously. "I've no desire to be too severe, but that awful sight shocked my nerves, and I may never get over it."

This awful outlook grieved Dolly's tender heart, and she flew to the old lady and clasped her hand, while she said:

"I'm *so* sorry, Aunt Nine! I didn't know you had nerves, and I thought you'd be 'mused to see Lady Eliza sitting there. I don't know *how* we happened to give her the carving knife. But we 'most always put *something* in her hand. I wish we'd thought of a fan! That would have been pretty, and it wouldn't have hurt your nervousness,—would it?"

"Perhaps not," said Aunt Penninah, grimly, but she couldn't help smiling at pretty little Dolly, who was caressing her be-ringed old hand, and looking imploringly up into her face.

Then she turned to Dick.

"And how about you, sir?" she said. "Did you think it amusing to threaten a guest with a carving-knife?"

Dick came over and looked at her with his straightforward eyes.

"I didn't mean to threaten you, of course," he said. "But it *was* naughty, and I'm sorry,—we're both sorry,—and can we do *anything* to make you forgive us?"

"No, you can't," said Aunt Penninah, "but when you look at me like that,—with your father's very eyes,—there is no question of forgiveness. You're all Dana—both of you!"

And then the strange old lady kissed both the twins and peace was restored all around.

Dinner went on smoothly. Miss Abbie and Miss Rachel were secretly impatient, because there was much yet to be done before the Reading Circle came, but Miss Penninah's presence admitted of no scanting of ceremony.

Hannah's service was more punctilious than the twins had ever before known it, for Hannah had been at Dana Dene many years, and knew the exactions and demands of a visit from Miss Penninah.

But at last the lengthy meal reached its close.

"Will you go to your room for a rest, Aunt Nine?" said Miss Abbie, hopefully, as they rose from the table.

"No, I won't; I'm not tired at all. I'll make the further acquaintance of these very astonishing young relatives of mine."

"Oh, do, Aunt Nine! Do come and play with us!" cried Dick, with such unmistakable sincerity that the old lady was greatly pleased.

"Yes, come out and see our gardens," said Dolly, dancing by her side, and to the great relief of the other two aunties, Miss Penninah walked off with the twins.

Then Hannah and the two ladies flew 'round like mad. They put leaves in the table until it was as long as possible; they set it with all the best china and glass and silver for the Reading Circle's tea. For the feast was not a tea at all, but a most elaborate supper, and Aunt Nine's coming had sadly delayed the preparations.

Meantime, that elderly dame was walking round the children's playground. She was greatly pleased with their gardens, and was surprised to learn that they tilled and weeded them all themselves.

"You're really very smart little people," she said, "and quite worthy to bear the Dana name."

The twins were flattered, for they well knew how highly all their aunts thought of the Dana name, and, too, they had already begun to like the peculiar old lady who had scolded them so harshly at the very beginning of their acquaintance.

When it was nearly time for the ladies of the Reading Circle to arrive, Aunt Rachel told the twins they must go out to their playground and stay there all the afternoon.

"For," she said, "I cannot run the risk of having some ridiculous thing happen during our programme. You don't mean to do wrong, but you're just as likely as not to stand Lady Eliza up beside our President when she's making her address. So take Eliza with you, and go out to the garden, and stay there until Delia rings the bell, or Hannah comes to call you."

"All right," said Dick, "and if any of the boys or girls come over, may Hannah send them out there to us?"

"Yes, I'll tell her. Now, run along."

They ran along, though slowly, because of Lady Eliza's difficult transportation. But at last they reached the playground, and stood Eliza in a corner, ready for action when they needed her.

"Jiminy Crickets!" remarked Dick, "but Aunt Nine's the funny old lady, isn't she, Doll?"

"Yep; but I sort of like her. After she got through blowing us up, she was real jolly."

"Yes, and wasn't Auntie Rachel the brick to stand up for us at dinner time?"

"She was so. I wonder how long Aunt Nine is going to stay."

"I dunno. A week, I guess. Hello, here comes Pinkie. Hello, Pinkie!"

"Hello!" she returned, and then almost before she and Dolly had said "Hello!" Jack Fuller came.

This quartette were almost always together on pleasant afternoons, and as Dana Dene had attractions that the other homes didn't possess, they played there oftener than elsewhere.

"Hello, Lady Eliza Dusenbury," said Jack, shaking hands with that silent partner.

Of course, all the boys and girls knew Lady Eliza now, and indeed the citizens of the village had ceased to be surprised when the twins rode to town in the farm wagon, with Eliza accompanying them.

The servants at Dana Dene took her as a matter of course, and Michael was fond of bowing politely, and saying, "The top of the mornin' to ye, ma'am!"

"Let's build a throne and crown Eliza queen," suggested Jack, and the rest at once agreed.

"What shall we make the throne of?" asked Dolly.

"I'll ask Michael," said Dick, "he always helps us out."

But Michael was busy with some extra work connected with the visit of the Reading Circle, and had no time for bothering with youngsters.

"Throne, is it?" he said; "I've no time to be buildin' ye royal palaces! Take the wheelbarrow for a throne, shure!"

It was a chance suggestion, but it served, and Dick returned to the waiting group, trundling the wheelbarrow.

"We can't bother Michael much," he said, "'cause he has to run that Reading Circle thing. But I guess we can fix up this wheelbarrow with flowers and greens and make it do. Hello, Maddy; Hello, Cliff!"

Madeleine and Clifford Lester had arrived during Dick's absence, but greetings were soon spoken, and the more the merrier.

Then the half dozen went to work with a will, using both heads and hands to devise ingenious plans for the coronation of Eliza.

"She ought to be dressed in white," said Dolly, looking disapprovingly on Eliza's blue dress; "but she hasn't a white frock to her name."

"Hasn't your aunt any?" asked Pinkie, realising the real need of white.

“I can’t bother her to-day,” said Dolly, decidedly; “she’s got the Reading Circle and Aunt Nine both at once; and she told me to keep out.”

“Couldn’t you get a big white apron from Delia,” suggested Maddy Lester.

“No; queens don’t wear aprons.”

Then Dolly’s eye lighted on the clothes line, full of the Monday wash, which busy Delia had not yet taken in, though it was thoroughly dry.

“I might get something there!” she cried. “Come on, girls!”

The three girls ran to the big, sunny bleaching ground, where three long lines of white clothes waved in the breeze.



LADY DUSENBURY'S PARTY (Page [288](#))

"They're all too little," said Pinkie, as she viewed Dolly's own dresses and petticoats.

"No, here's Aunt Rachel's nightgown! This will do!" cried Dolly, and in a jiffy she had the clothespins pulled off, and the voluminous, ruffled garment in her arms.

"Just the thing!" cried Maddy, and they raced back to the playground.

It made a beautiful white robe for Eliza, and when belted with a large bath-towel, also brought from the clothes line, Eliza looked like an Oriental princess.

"Get another towel and make a turban," said Clifford, and this gave their queen a still more

foreign look.

"The throne thing ought to be white, too," said Pinkie, who had an eye for color effect. "It'll be a lot prettier to pin the flowers and greens on, if it's white first. Let's get sheets,—shall we, Dolly?"

"I don't care," said Dolly, absorbed in making Eliza's turban stay on her head.

So Pinkie and Madeleine flew for the sheets, and stripped the clothesline of all there were there.

"Now!" they exclaimed, coming back triumphantly, with their arms full of billows of white linen.

"Now!" cried Dick, and they fell to work, and draped and twisted the sheets, until the wheelbarrow was a lovely white throne. This they decked with their flower garlands, and then lifted Queen Eliza up on it. As she, too, had been decked with blossoms and garlands, it was really a pretty sight, and the children clapped their hands and danced about in glee at their own success.

"Now, we'll crown her," said Dick, "but I say, Dollums, we all ought to be in white, too!"

"That's easy," said Dolly, recklessly; "there's lots of things on the clothesline yet."

Back there they all ran, and chose costumes to please their varying tastes.

The three girls chose more ruffled nightgowns like Eliza's and looped them up with flowers on either side, like fancy overskirts.

The boys selected lace-ruffled petticoats that belonged variously to the aunts or to Hannah and Delia, and round their shoulders they draped tablecloths or pillowshams in toga fashion.

Some table centrepieces and carving-scarfs formed fine head-gear, and by the time all the costumes were completed, the clotheslines looked as if the wash had been taken in after all.

The white-garbed half dozen pranced back to the queen on her throne, and the ceremonies began.

"First, we sing a dirge," said Jack Fuller.

"Not a dirge," said Dolly. "Don't you mean a chant?"

"Well, some waily kind of a thing, anyway."

So they all droned an inharmonious series of wailings that might have been imitative of Chinese tom-toms, only it wasn't meant to be.

"Now we must have a speech," said Pinkie; "you make it, Dick; you're good at that."

"All right," said Dick, and stepping forward, while his tablecloth toga trailed in the dust, he began:

"Oh, Queen Eliza Dusenbury, we beg you to accept this crown. We want you for our beloved queen, and we will obey all your rules and reggilations. We bow our hominage——"

"Homage," corrected Jack.

"Taint, it's hominage! bow, anyway!"

So they all bowed in token of homage to their queen.

"Now we have to back away," said Maddy; "they always do at court."

The six backed away from the queen's throne, but as backing with long trailing robes is not to be neatly done without practice, they one and all tripped over their trains and togas and went tumbling around on the ground.

"Get up, all of you!" cried Dick, who had scrambled to his feet. "Now we must sing."

"What shall we sing?"

"I don't care—"John Brown's Body," I guess."

So they all sang "John Brown's Body" with great gusto, and then the coronation

ceremonies were declared over.

And none too soon, for just then they saw Michael coming with a huge trayful of good things, which he placed on the table in the arbour.

“Fer the land’s sake!” he exclaimed as the children crowded round. “Whatever have yez been up to now! The clean clo’es from the line, as I’m a sinner! Arrah, but ye’ll catch it, ye bad babies!”

“Wow! they did get dirty, didn’t they?” exclaimed Jack, realising for the first time how they had tumbled about on the ground.

“Yes, they’re all dirt and grass stains. Will your aunts mind, Dolly?”

“I don’t know,” said Dolly, “but anyway it isn’t your fault, any of you. Let’s take ’em off and eat supper now.”

It was characteristic of Dolly to spare her guests’ feelings, though she had herself a sudden uneasy sense of naughtiness at having taken the clean clothes to play with. But it was also her nature to put off an evil hour, if possible, so the children gaily scrambled out of their white raiment and sat down to the feast with good appetites.

“The girls is waitin’ on the Readin’ ladies,” said Michael, as he came out with a second trayful, “so ye’re to wait on yerselves with these things.”

Then Dolly and Pinkie arranged the table, and soon the group were eating sandwiches and cakes and strawberries and ice cream, and all the good things that went to make up a Reading Circle feast.

“The little raskills!” said Michael, as he gathered up the sheets and garments they had thrown off. “Whatever is the rayson, I dunno, but Miss Dolly and Masther Dick is just the baddest little shpalpeens I iver saw, an’ yet I love ’em, ivery breath they draws!”

CHAPTER XV

PUNISHMENT

The Reading ladies had departed, and the younger guests of Dana Dene had also trotted homeward.

"It's too bad to take those things off of Eliza," said Dolly, "she looks so pretty in 'em. Let's take her, wheelbarrow and all, to show to the aunties."

"I'm 'fraid Aunt Nine will faint again," objected Dick.

"Oh, no, she won't; it was the carving knife that scared her."

So the twins trundled the white-draped wheelbarrow, and its white-garbed occupant straight up to the front door of the house.

"Come out, aunties!" they called. "The queen wants you to salute her majesty!"

Hearing the commotion, the three ladies came out on the veranda, and this time Aunt Penninah did not faint, but seemed greatly interested in the majestic Eliza.

"What have you put on her?" the old lady cried. "Why, they're clothes,—rough-dry! Did you take them from the clotheslines? Rachel, do you allow these children to act up like that? I am ashamed of them, and you, too!"

Just then Delia came out to the veranda with a clothes-basketful of the garments the children had played with. Good-natured Delia rarely minded the twins' mischief, but it had been a specially hard day, and the extra work and company had tired her out completely. Also, it *was* annoying to find her carefully washed clothes all muddled and grass-stained!

"Will ye look at this, Miss Rachel!" she exclaimed, her face red and angry. "It's too much to ask of a gur-rl to hurry up her wash an' cook for comp'ny on a Monday, an' thin to go fer her clothes, an' find 'em like this!"

Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie looked at the twins. So did Aunt Penninah. Dick and Dolly looked at the clothes in Delia's basket. They *were* a sorry sight, but the twins seemed surprised rather than ashamed.

"Why, Delia Maloney!" cried Dick. "Are you sure we spoiled those clothes like that! Why, we just wore them to the coronation. I didn't 'spect it would hurt 'em a bit!"

"Neither did I!" cried Dolly. "I'm awful sorry, Delia. I s'pose we ought not to have taken 'em; but truly, I never thought about their getting dirty. Will you have to wash 'em all over again?"

"Will I!" said Delia, grimly; "that I will, Miss Dolly; an' a foine time I'll have gettin' the green stains out, for-bye the mud; an' to say nothin' of their being torn to bits!"

She held up a sheet and a tablecloth, each of which showed a jagged tear.

"I'll mend those," said Dolly, cheerfully, "they'll be good practice, for Aunt Rachel is just teaching me darning in my sewing lessons."

Soft-hearted Delia couldn't help smiling at the earnest little face; Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie looked perplexed; but Aunt Penninah was unable to restrain expression of her feelings.

"You're the worst children I ever saw!" she exclaimed; "the very worst! At nine years old you should know better than to cut up such naughty, wicked tricks! You must be severely punished. Rachel, if you don't punish them, I shall do so myself!"

Now Dick and Dolly were quite unaccustomed to this sort of scolding. Aunt Rachel, though severe in principle, was very lenient in practice, and Aunt Abbie was gentleness itself. So it

was with real curiosity that the twins drew nearer, to look at the reddening face and flashing black eyes of their great-aunt, and Dick said, very seriously:

"We *were* naughty, Aunt Nine; and if you punish us, how are you going to do it?"

The question was not at all impertinent, Dick's round little face showed only a justifiable interest, and Aunt Penninah looked a little baffled, as both twins waited eagerly for her answer.

"Do just what you please in the matter, Aunt Nine," said Miss Rachel, who had never quite outlived her youthful awe of the stern old lady. Miss Abbie clasped her hands in alarm, as if fearing the twins would be subjected to torture, and they all awaited Miss Penninah's dictum.

"I think," said the old lady, slowly,—and then she paused, a little disconcerted at the earnest gaze of the four brown eyes, that were so like those of the children's father, her favourite nephew.

"I think," she went on, more gently, "that I shall forbid you to go outside the house all day to-morrow."

She didn't say that she had had a far more severe punishment in mind, but had been deterred from inflicting it by those appealing eyes.

"Whew!" cried Dick, "stay in the house a whole day!"

"Yes," said Aunt Nine, her ire returning as she noted the other aunts' sorrowful looks, and Delia's woe-begone face. "You children need discipline. It's terrible the way you're let to run wild! Rachel, you've no idea of training children properly, and as for you, Abbie, you're simply a tool in their hands!"

Dolly took a step nearer to the old lady.

"Aunt Nine!" she cried, with flashing eyes, "don't you talk like that about my Aunt Abbie, or my Aunt Rachel, either! They know how to bring up children just splendid! And they're doing the best they can with me and Dick, but, as you know yourself, we're the worst children ever,—so what can you 'spect?"

"Yes," said Dick, taking his sister's part, as usual. "We'll do your old punishment, and we're sorry we were naughty;—but you can't jump on our aunties like that!"

The youngest inheritors of the celebrated Dana "spunk," faced bravely the oldest member of the proud old family, and she realised the justice of their reproof.

"The children are partly right," she said, turning to her older nieces with a short, sharp laugh; "and the matter must not be discussed further in their presence. Dick and Dolly, you will obey my orders about to-morrow, and now come and kiss me, and we will drop the subject."

Dick stared at his aunt and hesitated, but quicker-witted Dolly appreciated that, in Aunt Penninah's mind, the coming punishment wiped out even remembrance of the fault, and she willingly kissed her. Not the spontaneous, loving sort of embraces they gave the other aunties, but a whole-hearted, honest kiss of truce.

Dick followed her example, and then the twins were excused, and they raced out in the kitchen after Delia.

"The intherferin' ould lady!" cried Delia, as she snatched the children in her arms. "Sorra the day I iver wint to Miss Rachel wid thim clo'es; but I was that put about, Miss Dolly, dear."

"Oh, pooh, Delia," cried Dick; "you were all right, and we've come to 'pollergize for spoilin' your wash all up. We're awful sorry."

"Yes," chimed in Dolly, as Delia embraced them both; "we'll never do it again; but, truly, Delia, we didn't think!"

"Av coorse ye didn't, ye blissid babies! Shure ye niver think! An' what's a wash, more or less? I wish ould Miss Penninah had to do it hersilf fur teasin' ye."

"Now, Delia," said Dick, "you mustn't talk that way. Aunt Nine is our aunt, and we must love and respect her just as we do the other aunties."

"It's a thrue Dana ye are, Masther Dick; both of yez. An' ye're right, too. Miss Penninah is the grand old lady, and the rale head of the fambly. So do yez take yer punishment like the shwate childher ye be."

And having duly made good their reputation as "true Danas" Dick and Dolly trotted off to bed.

The next day proved to be the very loveliest day of the whole Spring.

The sun incessantly winked an invitation for the twins to come out and play. The blue sky smiled the same plea, and the soft breeze whispered it again and again.

The flowers nodded at them as they looked out of the windows, and the trees spread their branches, as in a welcoming embrace.

The birds twittered, "Come, come!" and, though too far away to be heard, Dolly knew, her pet chicken was peeping the same words.

But worst of all was to see Pat watering their own flower-beds,—their pansies and daffodils that had never drank from any hands save the twins' own!

This sight nearly made the tears come, but Dick said bravely:

"We must make the best of it, Dollums. There's no use of getting all weepy-waily when it won't do any good."

"No, but Dick, don't you s'pose she'd just let us go and water our plants,—if we came right back?"

"Sha'n't ask her; and don't you ask that, either. Now we'll both do our practising,—I guess I'll practise another hour while you're doing your old sewing,—and then let's go up in the attic to play."

Dolly brightened a little. "All right; we've always been going to fish around up there, and we never had a good chance before."

So Dolly went to one piano, and Dick to the other, and they practised so diligently and painstakingly, that Aunt Penninah, who listened at the doors, was greatly pleased with their thorough work.

"There's good stuff in those children, Rachel," she said; "if you don't spoil them by your foolish leniency and over-indulgence."

"I don't mean to, Aunt Nine," said Miss Rachel, a little meekly, "but you know they're never purposely mischievous. The Danas are all impulsive and thoughtless, and Dick is exactly like his father was at his age."

"Yes, I know all that; but they need a strong hand to rule them, and though you and Abbie are firm enough in some ways, you give right in to those twins. Now, I don't!"

"No," said Miss Rachel, grimly, "you don't. How long are you going to stay this time, Aunt Nine?"

"I planned to stay only a day or two; but as I've become interested in John's children, I shall remain a week at least. I want to learn their natures, and, incidentally, I can help you with my judgment and advice."

Miss Rachel groaned in spirit, but made no audible objection to her aunt's decree.

Dolly's sewing hour that day was devoted to mending the clothes she and her little friends had torn, and by dint of much instruction from the three aunts, and honest industry on her own part, she achieved some very creditable darns and patches.

During the sewing hour, Aunt Penninah sought out Dick, and had a talk with him. She was

rather severe, but the clan feeling was strong in both, and after their conversation Dick felt a loyalty and respect toward the old lady, if not a deep affection.

Then, Dolly's sewing hour being over, the twins scampered for the attic.

"It's horrid," said Dick, "to be shut up in this stuffy old place on a day like this; but let's get all the fun we can out of it."

"Let's," agreed Dolly, and as a starter they rambled through the old, unused rooms, and looked at the old pictures and discarded furniture stored there.

"Awful poky!" said Dick as they sat down on a haircloth sofa, and stared at each other.

"Yes," said Dolly, with a scowl. "I think Aunt Nine is a horrid——"

"Don't talk that way, Doll," said Dick, remembering his conversation with the old lady; "just forget it,—forget outdoors and flowers and everything,—and let's play something nice."

"What can we play?" asked Dolly, disconsolately.

"I dunno; but isn't it funny why we can't think of something? If it was a rainy day and we couldn't go outdoors, we'd have lots of fun in the house."

"Well, let's play it's raining then."

This was a distinct suggestion, and Dick caught it at once.

"Wow!" he cried, looking out of the window; "what a storm! It's just pouring!"

"So it is!" said Dolly, gleefully; "we couldn't go out to-day even with umbrellas! Do you s'pose it'll clear by to-morrow?"

"Yes, I guess so. But it won't stop all day to-day."

"No, I don't believe it will. So we'll play up here to-day."

Then the twins went into the big lumber room, where all sorts of old things were stored away.

"What's that big boxy thing, face to the wall?" asked Dolly, looking at a plain black walnut affair, about as high as herself.

"Dunno; let's turn it around."

Dick pulled the thing out from the wall, which was quite easy, as it rolled on casters, and it proved to be entirely open on the other side.

It was about four feet high, and about three feet wide, and though something like a small wardrobe, it was divided into six equal compartments, each of which was lined with wallpaper.

"Why, Dick!" cried Dolly, "it's a playhouse! A doll's house, you know. I believe it was Aunt Abbie's when she was a little girl. Do you s'pose there's any furniture for it?"

"Must be; somewheres. Isn't it gay? See the windows, they have real glass in 'em. This must be the kitchen with oilcloth on the floor."

"Yes; and the other floors are all bare. I s'pose the carpets are put away somewhere, with the furniture. Let's hunt them."

The twins were not long in discovering three or four good-sized boxes tied together, which proved to contain the furniture of the doll's house.

"Oh, what fun!" cried Dolly, as they took out little beds and tables and chairs. "But we can't put these in place till we find the carpets. Oh, here comes Aunt Rachel. Auntie, was this your babyhouse when you were a little girl?"

"Yes," said Aunt Rachel, coming toward the twins. "I meant to fix it up for you some day, Dolly, but perhaps you'll like to fix it yourselves just as well."

"Yes, we will, Auntie!" cried Dolly, tumbling into her aunt's arms for a few caresses before they looked for the carpets.

"Who made the house, Auntie?" said Dick, snuggling into her other arm, and patting her

cheek.

“Why, a carpenter, I suppose. Father had it made for me when I was ten years old, and your father was a toddling baby. He used to creep up to it, and pull out the things that he could reach.”

“Did he look like us?” asked Dolly.

“He looked like Dick. You both have eyes like his, but his hair was in dark ringlets all over his head, like Dick’s is. Now, let’s find the carpets, and fix up the house. Wouldn’t you rather have it down in the playroom?”

“Oh, yes,” said Dick. “It’s pretty hot and dry up here. The playroom is lovely and airy, ’most like outdoors.” He gave a little sigh, and Aunt Rachel remembered that the children were undergoing punishment.

Her eyes twinkled a little, as she said:

“Aunt Nine didn’t make any other stipulation, except that you were to stay in the house all day, did she?”

“No’m,” said Dick. “And, Auntie Rachel, we’re *awful* sorry we spoiled the clean clothes.”

“Yes, *terrible* sorry,” added Dolly, while they both fondled their aunt half-unconsciously.

“You can be the sorriest pair of twins I ever saw, after your mischief is accomplished,” said Miss Rachel. “Why doesn’t your sorriness begin beforehand, I’d like to know?”

“Well, you see,” said Dolly, “we don’t think——”

“That’s just it, you never ‘think.’ Now, I’m going to teach you to think,—somehow; I don’t know how yet, but we’ll manage to make you thinkers somehow.”

“After Aunt Nine goes away,” suggested Dick.

“Yes,” agreed Aunt Rachel, “after Aunt Nine goes away.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE PLAYHOUSE

Then they all went down to dinner, the twins holding hands with each other, round Aunt Rachel's ample waist. As she had an arm round each of their necks, locomotion down the stairways was difficult, but they all accomplished it somehow, and made a triumphal entry at the dining-room door.

Aunt Penninah was already in her chair, and looked up sharply, as if expecting to see a doleful pair of twins.

But the laughing faces proved that, if not enjoying their punishment, the children were, at least, making the best of it, and Aunt Nine sniffed a little, as she asked:

"What have you been doing all morning?"

"Oh, having the beautifulest time!" exclaimed Dolly. "We found an old doll's house, that used to be Auntie Rachel's when she was a little girl."

"And my father played with it, too," said Dick, proudly.

"Oh, Rachel," said Miss Abbie, with a disappointed look, "we meant to keep that for their Christmas!"

"It doesn't matter," said her sister, serenely; "they may as well have it now. Hannah, tell Michael to bring it down to the playroom while we're at dinner."

Hannah obeyed, and the twins could scarcely eat their dinner for anticipation of the fun to come.

"Your punishment doesn't seem very hard to bear," said Aunt Nine, looking quizzically at the children.

"Oh, yes it is, Auntie," said Dick. "We'd ever so much rather run out of doors in this sunshiny day, and save the playhouse for a rainy day. Truly, we feel the punishment very much."

It somehow seemed to Dick's queer little brain that it was rude to defraud Aunt Penninah of her rights. She had evidently expected them to repine at being kept indoors, and though they hadn't exactly done that, she was entitled to know that they really were feeling the punishment. And it was quite true. Both he and Dolly would have gladly postponed the playhouse fun, to scamper out for a run in the garden. Aunt Nine nodded a sort of approval.

"You're an honest little chap, Dick," she said; "I'm beginning to like you."

"Don't you like Dolly, too?" asked Dick, with the air of one merely seeking information.

"Yes, I like you both. If you'd be a little more thoughtful, and——"

"Oh, we're going to learn to think," said Dolly. "Auntie Rachel is going to teach us."

"I wish her joy of her task," said Aunt Penninah, but her eyes twinkled just a little mite, and the twins began to think she was really not such an ogress as she had seemed at first.

After dinner they all went up to the playroom, and found the playhouse well placed, in a corner between two windows.

"Oh," cried Dolly in rapture, as she saw the boxes full of furniture, and the bundles of carpet.

The carpets smelled of camphor as Aunt Rachel unrolled them, for they had been carefully put away from the moths, and proved to be in perfect condition.

The aunties all looked a bit sober, as the small squares were unfolded, for their thoughts

flew back nearly forty years, when Rachel and Abbie had been little girls, and Penninah Dana had been a beautiful young woman.

But no such memories saddened the twins' hearts, and they capered about in glee, shaking out the carpets, and holding them up for inspection.

"This is the parlour one!" cried Dolly, as a light velvety square appeared.

She tucked it into place, and it exactly fitted the parlour floor.

Two bedroom carpets were there; a library and a dining-room,—and the kitchen already had oilcloth on it.

Then came the furniture, and both twins fairly squealed with delight over the funny little things, as they took them from the boxes and put them in place in the rooms of the playhouse.

The dining-room furniture was all of iron.

"That stove," said Miss Rachel, holding a black iron stove of the shape known as "cylinder," "father brought me when I was getting well after the measles. 'You can build a real fire in it,' he said, 'it's a real little stove.'"

"And did you?" asked Dick.

"Yes; several times. There's a tiny tin pipe that goes out through this hole in the wall of the house. See?"

The twins saw, but there was so much to see, little time could be spent on any one thing. The parlour furniture was of satin brocade, of deep red colour, which was unfaded, and quite as good as new.

"I helped make those chairs," said Aunt Nine. "I cut and basted, while your mother sewed them, Rachel."

"They're beautifully made," said Miss Rachel. "Dolly, if you want some more, you can make them in your sewing-hour."

"I'll make you some," said Aunt Penninah. "If you can find some pretty bits of stuff, Abbie, I'll make a few to-day."

"Oh, do, Aunt Nine," cried Dolly. "These chairs are all right, but it would be so lovely to have some new ones of our very own!"

"I'm going to make some little wooden chairs and tables," said Dick. "I can cut them out with my jigsaw, and glue them together."

"Do," said Aunt Abbie, "and we'll make satin cushions for them, and tie them on with little ribbons."

The furnishing of the house went on, and it would be hard to say which were more interested, the twins or the older people.

When they came up to the bedrooms, they found the tiny sheets and pillowcases yellow with age.

"Will you make us some new ones, Aunt Rachel?" asked Dolly.

"Yes; or Delia can bleach these for you. They're as good as ever, except their colour."

Then the aunties discovered that the portières for the parlour were faded, and the lace curtains had turned irretrievably brown, so off went Aunt Abbie to get some bits of stuff at once, to make new ones.

And very soon the three aunties were busily engaged in cutting and sewing all sorts of pretty things for the house.

The best bedstead was of the sort that requires dimity curtains and valance to make it complete.

Aunt Penninah offered to fit this bed out entirely, and her deft needle flew in and out of the

muslins Aunt Abbie brought, until she had made the little bed the most charming affair imaginable.

In addition to the curtains, she hemmed tiny sheets; she made a dear blanket, of a morsel of white flannel bound with ribbon; and lovely pillowcases, with hemstitched ends.

Then, to Dolly's breathless delight, she made a little silk comfortable, with a layer of cotton-wool in it, and tacked at intervals with microscopic bows of blue ribbon.

Of course this work of the aunties took all the afternoon, and indeed, it wasn't finished that day.

But the interest in the house grew more and more absorbing as the days went by, and though the children loved out of doors best, they often devoted a few hours of the pleasantest days to "Dana Cottage," as they called it. When it was nearly finished, as to furnishing, they began to prepare a family of dolls to occupy it. Aunt Nine offered to present the entire family, and afterward assist in making their clothing.

So one fine afternoon Miss Penninah and the twins drove to town to select the dolls. It was great fun, and yet it was a responsibility, too. Dick was quite as much interested as Dolly, for somehow, the house offered so much boyish work, and play, that it didn't seem like "playing with dolls."

Besides the twins always did the same things, and Dolly would have lost her own interest in the playhouse if Dick hadn't shared it.

So, after much consultation, they chose a father and a mother doll, an aunt doll, two small children dolls, and a baby doll. A nurse and two other servants were added, and then they declared they had enough.

"Enough? I should think so!" said Aunt Nine, who began to see endless doll-dressing ahead of her. But her eyes twinkled; and then she let the twins select from the shop several bits of dolls' furniture that were not in vogue when the playhouse was originally furnished.

Laden with their treasures they all went home, and that very evening the aunties began on the dolls' wardrobes.

"Is this your idea of disciplining the children, Aunt Nine?" said Miss Rachel, as they sewed, after Dick and Dolly had gone to bed.

Miss Penninah Dana looked a little confused, but she answered straightforwardly:

"I think you were nearer right than I, Rachel. The twins are not what we used to call 'good children.' I mean the meek, mild, priggish little persons that children were taught to be when I was young. Dick and Dolly are so full of life and spirits that they do wrong things from sheer thoughtlessness and gaiety of heart. But they are never wilfully mischievous, and never deceitful about it afterward. They do need firm guidance, but they do not need to be taught the difference between right and wrong, for they already know it. They are true Danas."

When Miss Penninah announced that last fact, she felt that she had given the last word of praise to the twins, and indeed, the other two aunts thought so too.

So clannish were they, and so proud of their fine old family, that they greatly preferred Dick and Dolly to be "true Danas" than to possess many other admirable traits. And so, the three stitched away, quite agreed, at last, on the management of the children, and hoping they would grow up to manhood and womanhood, with the inherited traits of dignity, honour, and refinement that characterised their family.

Meanwhile the "true Danas" upstairs were sleeping soundly, and only awoke when the sun peeped in at their windows and winked and blinked right into their eyes.

And when, later, they danced down to breakfast, there in a row on the sofa sat a smiling and

well-dressed family, all ready to take up their abode in "Dana Cottage."

Dolly went into ecstasies over the mother doll, who wore a trailing house dress of light blue satin trimmed with lace. The aunt, too, was resplendent in crimson velvet, and the children were in the daintiest of white or light frocks.

The father-doll had been difficult to dress, but though a professional tailor might have taken exception to the cut, the aunties had made his neat suit fit him very well indeed.

Dick was interested in the new family, and admired them duly, but he was already thinking of how he could build a yard around the house itself, and he confided his plans to Dolly.

"We'll fence off a space all round the house," he said. "I'll make a little picket fence with splints. It's just as e-easy! Then we'll get green velvet carpet for the grass."

"Oh, carpet isn't a bit like grass," objected Dolly. "It's so thick and dusty. Let's have real dirt,—or sand."

"I think sand is messy."

"Yes, so do I. Oh, I tell you what, Dick! Let's cut green tissue paper into fine fringe, and put it round where we want grass,—paste it to something, you know,—like we made fairies' wings,—only green."

"Yes, that's the ticket!" exclaimed Dick. "Then we'll make little paths of,—of brown paper, I guess,—pasted down."

"Yes; take a big sheet of pasteboard first, and then stick everything on it."

"Yes, that's what I mean. Then bits of evergreen for trees, and perhaps real flowers, growing in little bits of pots."

"Oh, it will be lovely! Dick, you're splendid to think of it all!"

The twins joined hands and jumped up and down, as was their custom when greatly pleased with each other. Then the aunties came in, and they all went to breakfast.

The children told their plan for the yard around the house, and the ladies agreed that it would be lovely.

"I'll help you to make a pond, Dickie," said Aunt Penninah, "like one I had when *I* was a little girl. That dates farther back than Aunt Rachel's childhood."

"How do you make a pond?" asked Dick, not much interested in comparative dates of past Danas.

"We must get a piece of mirror,—without a frame, you know,—and put it in the middle of your grass plot, and then put pretty stones or shells round the edge of the mirror, and it looks just like water."

"And little tin ducks on it," shouted Dick, "like a real pond! Oh, Auntie, that will be tip-top!"

"And I'll make you a pond on the other side of your house," put in Aunt Abbie, "of real water. In a big flat pan, you know; and little sprigs of fern all round the edge."

"All right; we'll have both," declared Dick. "I don't know which'll be nicest, they're both so splendid. And I'll make a little boat to sail on the water. I can whittle it out of a stick."

"And I'll make a sail for it," said Aunt Abbie, "and we'll rig up a sail-boat."

Such interest did the aunts take in the cottage yard, it was almost as if they were children too, and Dick and Dolly became more and more enraptured with the wonderful things they made.

Aunt Abbie fashioned a little hammock with her crochet needle and some green and white cord. When she put fringe along its edges, and suspended it from two evergreen trees in the "yard," Dolly thought she had never seen anything so cunning. Two little dolls were put into it,

and the nurse doll was set to swing them until they fell asleep. Michael, who was greatly pleased with the whole affair, fashioned a tiny arbour just like their own in their playground outside. It was made of tiny twigs, and when the gardener brought it in, as his offering to the general gaiety, it was accepted with hilarious thanks. Very small green vines were twisted about it, and tiny blossoms of forget-me-not or lilies-of-the-valley were entwined. But the little flowerets faded so soon that Aunt Abbie made some diminutive roses of pink tissue paper, which would stay fresh all summer.

Many plans were made for future additional beauties, and the little estate grew rapidly to an elaborate country place, when Michael declared that he should build a barn for it. This announcement was heralded with delight, and for many days, Michael spent all his spare time in the tool-house, Dick and Dolly bobbing about him, and helping or hindering as best they could.

The barn, when done, was a grand affair indeed. Not of very elaborate architecture, but provided with stables, carriage house, feed bins, and even a chicken coop.

Again Aunt Nine took the twins to town on a shopping expedition, and this time they returned with all the four-legged and two-legged toys necessary to complete the barn's use and beauty. Also there were carriages for the dolls to drive in, and sleighs, too, for in doll land the lack of snow makes no difference in the sleighing season.

Aunt Penninah's visit of a week lengthened out to a fortnight, but not until the last tiny carriage robe was finished, and the last hat and cape made for the smallest doll, did Aunt Nine make her farewells to Dana Dene.

And, then, she went away, promising to return for another visit as soon as possible, and insisting on a promise that the twins should some day visit her in her own home.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FATE OF DANA COTTAGE

Pinkie was enraptured at her first sight of Dana Cottage. She sat down in front of it and gazed in silence, seemingly unable to take it all in at once.

"Well," she said at last, "it's a lovely home for dolls, but wouldn't it be a fine place for fairies?"

Dolly laughed, for she hadn't the firm belief in fairies that Pinkie had. Dolls were good enough for her, and as Pinkie loved dolls too, they spent many happy hours with the playhouse.

Sometimes Dick and Jack played with them, and sometimes the boys went off on their own sports, while the girls were absorbed in the dolls' house.

One afternoon the boys were busily engaged in making and flying kites, and the girls, up in the playroom, were having lots of fun with Dana Cottage, but paused in their play frequently, to run and look out of the window to see how the kites were flying.

"I don't believe they'll ever make them go," said Pinkie, as she and Dolly leaned out of the playroom window. "The kites are too big."

"Then they'll have to trim 'em off, or make smaller ones," said Dolly, philosophically. "I don't see any fun in kite-flying anyway, just because they 'most never do fly."

"Wouldn't it be funny," said Pinkie, "if you could fly a kite, 'way—'way up in the air, and then pull it down again, and find a whole lot of fairies perched on it?"

"Yes; that would be fine. But fairies don't live up in the air."

"No; they live in the woods, hidden by the ferns and leaves. I wish I could ever see them."

"Well, you can't, 'cause they only come out at night. You can't go to the woods at night, can you?"

"I will, when I'm grown up. 'Course, mother won't let me now, but when I'm big, the first thing I'm going to do is to go to the woods, and camp out all night, and watch for fairies."

"All right; I'll go with you. We'll surely see them then."

"Yes, indeed, we will. Oh, I wish we could go now!"

"Well, we can't. Aunt Rachel wouldn't let me, and I know your mother wouldn't let you. Come on, those kites will never fly; let's go on with the party."

The doll family in Dana Cottage were giving a very grand party. As there were no other dolls to invite, Pinkie and Dolly had made a lot of paper dolls for the guests. These were not elaborate, being hastily cut from brown paper, but they wanted a lot of guests, so they chopped out a multitude of dolls, and stood them around in the various rooms of the doll house.

"I wish we'd made them prettier," said Dolly, regretfully, for her artistic sense was jarred upon by the crude brown paper guests in the dainty, pretty rooms.

"So do I," agreed Pinkie. "Let's dress them up a little, somehow."

So they found colored tissue paper, and bedecked the dolls with floating sashes and scarfs and head-dresses, until they presented a much more festive appearance.

"That's lots better," declared Dolly, as they placed the improved ladies and gentlemen at the party. So many did they have, that the parlour was filled with dancers, and the dining-room with supper guests at the same time.

Pinkie was of a realistic turn of mind, and insisted on having bits of real cracker or cake or

apple in the dishes on the table, and real water in the pitchers and coffee pots on the sideboard.

Dolly was quite content to have scraps of paper for cakes, or even empty dishes filled merely with imagination, but when Pinkie played with her they usually had real things wherever possible.

The china dolls of the family, and the paper guests kept up a continuous conversation, and the voices were either Pinkie's or Dolly's as occasion required. A deep, gruff voice represented a gentleman talking, and a high, squeaky voice, a lady.

"What a beautiful party we're having," said a brown paper man in Dolly's deepest chest tones.

"Yes," squeaked a lovely lady, in light blue crinkled tissue paper. "Please get me a glass of lemonade."

The brown gentleman deftly poured about two drops of water from a tiny pitcher into a tinier cup, and gallantly offered it to the lady.

It accidentally soaked her tissue paper scarf, as she drank it, but two drops wouldn't hurt anybody's costume seriously, so the incident was overlooked, and the gay chatter went on.

"Are you going to opera to-morrow night?" asked one bewitching belle of another.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "I'm so fond of music. I practise an hour every day."

"So do I. I'm learning to sing, too. That's why I wear this boa, I have to take such care of my throat."

"Are you warm enough here?" inquired the china hostess, who overheard her paper guests' conversation; "because, if you aren't, we can light a fire for you."

"I do feel a little chilly," began the paper belle, and then Pinkie's voice suddenly resumed its natural tones:

"Oh, Dolly, let's make a fire in the little stove,—a *real* fire. You said your aunt used to do it."

"Yes, she did," said Dolly. "Do you know how?"

"Why, yes; you only put in snips of paper and light 'em. The smoke goes out through the pipe."

Carefully, the girls put crumpled bits of paper into the little iron stove, and then Dolly brought a match.

"You light it," she said, and Pinkie struck the match, and touched off the paper.

They shut the tiny stove door, and the paper blazed away merrily. Some smoke came out through the tin pipe, but there wasn't much of it, and as the windows of the playroom were all wide open, the smoke soon drifted away.

This was a great game indeed, and the guests from the parlour all crowded down into the dining-room to get warm.

There was much laughing and chatter, as the paper dolls came down to the dining-room, and packed themselves in groups against the walls.

"Oh, how good that fire feels," exclaimed a lady in pink paper. "Why, it's all gone out!"

It was astonishing how fast the paper in the stove burned itself out, and the girls had to renew it repeatedly, and light it afresh each time.

"I'm 'bout tired of playing this," said Pinkie; "let's make one more fire and that'll be the last. It's getting awful hot."

"Yes, make one more," said Dolly, "for Mrs. Obbercrombie has just come down to get warm."

"All right; stand her up by the stove."

Pinkie touched off the newly-laid fire, and Dolly stood paper Mrs. Obbercrombie up near

the stove; so near, in fact, that the lady fell over against it.

Dolly reached out to pick her up, but her finger touched the hot stove, and she drew it back with an “Ouch!” The little stove, from the burning of much paper, was nearly red-hot, and when the paper doll fell over against it, she blazed up immediately.

Then the paper dolls nearest her caught fire at once, and in two seconds the paper dolls were all ablaze. The tissue paper scarfs communicated the flames like tinder; the thicker paper of the dolls themselves burned steadily, and in a few moments the curtains caught, then the wooden house itself, and as the breeze from the open windows fanned it, a real conflagration of Dana Cottage ensued!

Soon the paper grass in the cottage yard caught fire, and the wooden animals served as further fuel.

Dolly, her smarting finger still in her mouth, was too frightened even to scream, but Pinkie showed real presence of mind.

She grasped a pitcher of water from the table, and dashed it into the burning house. This was good as far as it went, but it merely checked the flames in one room, and there was no more water about. Then Pinkie seized the big rug from the floor, with intent to throw it over the house. But it was so anchored with heavy tables and other furniture that, of course, she could not budge it.

“Oh!” she gasped at last. “Do something, Dolly! Yell, can’t you? I don’t seem to have any voice!”

Sure enough, poor little Pinkie was so frightened that her voice had failed her, and Dolly was so frightened, she couldn’t *think* what to do.

So, at Pinkie’s suggestion, she yelled, and Dolly’s yell was that of a young, sound pair of lungs.

“Auntie!” she screamed. “Michael!” But as the playroom was on the third floor, and the aunts were down in the library, they did not hear her. Nor were the servants within ear-shot, so poor Dolly screamed in vain.

But as the flames grew bigger and threatened the window curtains of the playroom, Dolly shouted again, and this time a wild, despairing shriek of “Dick!” seemed to be her last resort.

And, by chance, the boys, with their kites, were not far from the house, and they heard the cry ring out of the playroom window.

“Hello, Dolly!” shouted Dick, back again, not thinking of danger, but merely supposing Dolly was calling to him.

His voice reached Dolly’s ears like a promise of hope, and flying to the window, where the curtains were already scorching, she screamed, “Fire, Dick! Call Michael! Pat! Bring water! Fire! Fire!”

Even as Dolly shouted, Dick and Jack saw the flames, and Dick cried out, “I’ll go for Michael; you go upstairs, Jack, and screech for Aunt Rachel as you go.”

So the two Dana ladies were startled from their quiet reading, by seeing Jack Fuller dash madly in at the front door, and whipping off his cap by instinct, almost pause, as he said politely, but hastily, “Please, Miss Rachel,—good-afternoon. Your house is on fire! Excuse me!” and he ran breathlessly by the library door and up the stairs.

He couldn’t do a thing when he reached the playroom, for the flames were beyond the efforts of a ten-year-old boy.

But Dolly, who had found her wits, cried, “Pull down the curtains,” and she and Jack bravely pulled down a pair of light muslin curtains that had already begun to burn. They

stamped on these, and so extinguished their flames, and Pinkie, in her excitement, pulled down another pair and stamped on them, although they had not caught fire at all, and, indeed, were in no danger of it.

But by that time, Michael and Pat had arrived. Passing the trembling aunties on the lower landing, they tore upstairs, and Dick followed closely at their heels.

Michael took in the situation at one glance.

"Take holt av the table," he said to Pat, and the two strong men hustled the big table off the rug. Then they flung aside the chairs and other furniture that held the rug down, and, picking up the big carpet, flung it over the burning playhouse. The house toppled over with a crash, and the men trampled on the whole pile.

They smashed everything belonging to Dana Cottage, but it was the only way to conquer the flames, and Michael did not hesitate.

"Keep it up!" he said to Pat, and as Pat obediently stamped his big feet about, Michael turned to other parts of the room.

He stepped on a few smouldering papers, he pinched out a tiny flame in a curtain ruffle, and he threw a small rug over an already blazing waste-basket.

He unceremoniously pushed aside any children who got in his way, for Michael was very much in earnest. And he had reason to be. His prompt and speedy action had probably saved the whole house from burning down, and after he was sure there was no lurking flame left anywhere, he turned to the two ladies, who stood white-faced and trembling on the threshold.

"All right, Miss Rachel," he said, cheerily; "the baby-house is done for, but we've saved Dana Dene from burnin' up intirely."

"Is everybody safe?" asked Miss Rachel, bewildered with the suddenness and terror of it all.

"Safe an' sound, ma'am. Now, don't dishturb yerselves further, but you an' Miss Abbie an' the childher go back downstairs, an' me an' Pat'll be afther cleanin' up some here."

"But Dolly is burned!" cried Miss Abbie, seeing Dolly still holding out her blistered finger, and screwing her face in pain.

"No," said Dolly, "I did that before the fire. It's nothing."

"It's an awful blister," said Dick, looking at it. "But how did the fire start, Dollums? Did you do it?"

"Yes," said Dolly, "but I didn't mean to burn up the cottage." And then, as Michael and Pat were removing the big rug, and she saw the dreadful devastation of the beautiful dolls' house, she burst into paroxysms of weeping.

Pinkie did the same, and as the aunts were both softly crying, too, Dick and Jack had to be very careful lest they join the majority.

"Go downstairs, all of yez," said Michael, again, who had, by reason of his common sense, assumed dictatorship. "Oh, are ye there, Hannah? Take the ladies down, and mend up Miss Dolly's finger. Boys, ye can shtay, if ye like, but the rest of yez must go."

Obediently, the aunties followed Hannah, who led the weeping Dolly, and with Pinkie trailing along behind, they went downstairs.

"Now, boys," said Michael, "ye can help if ye like, an' ye needn't, if ye don't like. Pat an' me, we'll clear out this burnt shtuff, but Mashter Dick, suppose ye look about now, an' see if anny of the toys is worth savin'."

So Dick and Jack picked out some few things that the flames hadn't destroyed. But only china or metal toys escaped utter destruction, and these were so smoked and charred, that they

weren't much good. Pinkie's hat and jacket were scorched, but Jack laid them aside, and the work of salvage went on.

"There now, ye'd betther go," said Michael; "ye're good boys, an' ye've helped a lot, but now, me'n Pat, we'll cart this shtuff down oursilves. An' be the same token, I'm thinkin' we'll dump it out the windy,—that bein' the quickest way."

So Dick and Jack ran downstairs, really anxious to join the girls and find out how it all came about.

CHAPTER XVIII

A LOVELY PLAN

When the boys reached the group assembled in the library, Dolly had just begun to tell the story of the fire.

Up to that time, the aunts had been employed in dressing the burned finger, and in recovering their own mental poise.

"You see," Dolly was saying, "it was an accident, Aunt Rachel, but it *wasn't* mischief, for you told me yourself how you used to make a fire in that little stove."

"Oh," said Aunt Rachel, comprehending at last. "Did you girls make a fire in the playhouse stove?"

"Yes'm; the pipe was up, you know, and it burned all right,—it hardly smoked at all. Then one of the paper dolls fell against it and set fire to all the rest."

"The stove got so awful hot," observed Pinkie, "and it was trying to pick up that paper doll that Dolly burned her finger."

"And upset the stove?" asked Aunt Abbie.

"No, Auntie, the stove didn't upset. But Mrs. Obbercrombie caught ablaze, and then she fell over against the other paper people, and they all flared up."

"Whew, Dolly!" exclaimed Dick. "Then you kindled that whole fire yourself! You ought to have known better than to stuff a place with paper dolls and then set a match to it!"

"But I didn't, Dick," declared Dolly. "The fire was all right at first, only it kept making the little stove hotter and hotter, until it went off."

"Well, it's lucky Dick heard you yell," put in Jack, "or the whole of the big house would have burned as well as the little one."

"I don't know what to say to you, Dolly," said Aunt Rachel. "I remember that I did tell you I used to have a fire in that stove, but I only burned a tiny bit of paper and let it go right out. I never thought of a continued fire. And I really think you ought to have realised the danger of a fire near so much light paper."

"Why, I never once thought of that, Aunt Rachel. I never s'posed fire could jump through an iron stove, and burn up a paper doll! I thought if we kept the little door shut, the flames would stay inside."

"Oh, Dolly," said Aunt Abbie, smiling a little in spite of herself, "you should have known better. But you're not entirely to blame. We did tell you that we used to have real fire in that stove, but father was always with us to look after it. Children should *never* play with fire alone."

"Why didn't you tell me that before, Aunt Abbie?" said Dolly, looking at her with a gentle reproach in her big dark eyes. "If you had, I'd have called you up, 'fore we lit it the first time!"

"Phyllis," said Miss Rachel, turning to the little guest, "does your mother let you play with fire?"

"Why, no, Miss Rachel," said Pinkie, in surprise. "But then, mother never lets us do any of the things you let Dick and Dolly do. We haven't any garden or arbour or Lady Eliza or playhouse——"

At this, both Pinkie and Dolly began to cry afresh, for they remembered that now Dolly had no playhouse either! That beautiful house and barn and lawn and ponds,—all a mass of black, smoking ruins!

Dolly flew to her Aunt Rachel and buried her head on her broad, comforting shoulder as she sobbed out her woe.

"Oh, Auntie," she wailed; "isn't it dreadful! Those lovely little beds and bureaus, and the dolls Aunt Nine dressed,—and the looking-glass lake, and that little spotted pig,—he was *so* cunning,—and the gilt clock in the parlour,—oh—ooh—o-o-ooh!"

"There, dearie, there, there,—" soothed Miss Rachel, wondering whether Aunt Nine would think Dolly ought to be punished, and if so, what for.

"I wasn't naughty, was I, Auntie?" went on Dolly, between her sobs. "I wouldn't be so naughty as to burn up my dear playhouse on purpose!"

"Of course you didn't do it on purpose, dear; and I don't believe you were really naughty. But never mind that, now. Even if you were, you're punished enough by the loss of the playhouse."

"Yes, I think I am. We were having *such* fun, Pinkie and I. And, Auntie, it wasn't a bit Pinkie's fault either. We wouldn't either of us have thought of making a fire, if you hadn't said we could. I mean, you said you used to do it."

"Yes, Dolly, dear; I fully realise how it all happened, and I'm not going to blame either you or Phyllis. I think you should have known it was a dangerous pastime, but if you'll promise never to play with fire or matches again, we'll count this affair merely as an accident. But it was a pretty bad accident, and I'm very thankful that only the playhouse was burned. I shudder to think what might have happened to you two little girls!"

"And to the whole house!" said Miss Abbie. "If Dick hadn't heard you scream, and if Michael and Pat hadn't been at home, we might have no roof over our heads now!"

Then Phyllis and Jack went home, and the others went up to the playroom, to see what was left in the ruins. Michael and Pat were still cleaning up, but the whole room had been more or less affected by the smoke, if not by the flame.

The rug, being a thick, Oriental one, had not suffered much, but the wallpaper and woodwork were sadly marred, the curtains were a wreck, and the furniture was scratched and broken.

As to the playhouse, the actual framework was fairly intact, except where the dining-room had been burned away, but it was blackened and charred everywhere.

Miss Rachel directed the men to take it to the cellar, and leave it there for the present.

"Sometime," she said, "we may have it rebuilt and re-decorated, but I can't seem to think about it just now. Do you want to keep any of these things, Dolly?"

Dolly looked over the half-burned toys that Dick and Jack had picked out of the ruins, and more tears came as she recognised what had been the blue satin sofa, and the baby's crib.

"No, I don't want them," she said; "they only make me feel worse."

Then they found the little stove, that had been the immediate cause of the catastrophe. It was unharmed, except that it looked dull instead of shiny, as before.

"I think you'd better set this on the mantel, Dolly," said Aunt Abbie, "to remind you not to play with fire."

"I'll never play with fire again, Auntie," said Dolly. "But I will put it on the mantel, to remind me of my dear playhouse. Oh, I did love it so!"

Dolly had a great fondness for all her belongings, and the playhouse, with its myriad delights was her dearest and best beloved possession.

"It's too bad, Dollums," said Dick. "If Aunt Rachel ever does decide to have the house done over, I'll do the yard all over again for you."

"An' I'll make yez a new barn," said Michael, who was just removing the burned remnants of the old one; "but I can't be doin' it this summer; there's too much other wurrk. Next winter, when the wurrk is lighter, I'll have a thry at it."

And none of them felt like doing right over again the work they had done so recently, so the burned-out cottage was put in the cellar, and stayed there for a long time. The playroom itself had to be done over at once.

A carpenter had to come first, and replace the burned window sill, where the curtains had blazed up; then the paper-hangers and painters; so that it was several weeks before the room could be used.

Meantime, Dick and Dolly played out in their out-of-doors playground.

It was now late in May, and the flowering vines had almost covered the long arbour, making a delightful place to sit and read, or make things at the table. The twins loved to make things, and often they thought they'd make furniture for the renovated playhouse, but it's hard to do things so far ahead, and so they didn't get at it.

Fortunately Lady Eliza had been on the other side of the playroom during the fire, so had escaped without even a scorch.

But Dick and Dolly played she was a great heroine, and often congratulated her on her narrow escape from the fearful conflagration. They never grew tired of Lady Eliza. She was useful for so many games, and all the children who visited the twins learned to look upon Eliza as one of their own crowd.

"Let's have a party for Eliza," said Dolly, one day, as she and Dick were working in their gardens. "Oh, Dick, there's a thrush! Sh! don't frighten him."

Silently the children watched, as a thrush perched on a nearby branch, and sang his best musical selection. There is more sentiment in a thrush's song than in that of any other of our birds, and though the twins didn't recognise exactly that fact, they loved to listen to the thrush.

It was their habit, after carefully watching a bird, to look it up in their big, illustrated "Birds of North America," and learn its name and habits.

"That's a Hermit Thrush," whispered Dolly. "See the lots of spots on his chest."

"Maybe," said Dick, softly; "but I think it's the Olive-Backed Thrush. See how brown his back and tail are."

"Yes, perhaps it is. Listen to his call,—he says 'Whee-oo! Too-whee!' We must look him up to make sure. Oh, there comes a robin after him! Now they'll fight!"

"Go 'way, you horrid thing!" called Dick to the big, fat Robin Redbreast, but unheeding, the robin flew at the thrush, and bothered him, until the thrush flew away, and Dick and Dolly saw it no more.

"I think it's too bad robins are so cross," said Dolly, "and they're so pretty, too. I'd love them, if they wouldn't pick-peck at the other birds."

"They are horrid," said Dick; "but if we didn't have robins, we wouldn't have much of anything. There are so few of the other birds,—'ceptin' sparrows."

"That's so; well, as I was saying before the thrush came, let's give Lady Eliza a party."

"Let's ask Aunt Rachel first," said Dick.

The twins were learning to ask permission beforehand, when they planned anything out of the ordinary. This had already saved them trouble, and the aunts were already congratulating themselves that the children were learning to "think."

"Yes, we will. But don't let's go in now. Let's plan it, and then we'll ask auntie before we really do anything about it."

"Well, who'll we invite?"

"That's 'cordin' how big the party is. If Auntie Rachel 'grees, let's have a big party, 'bout a dozen, you know. And if she thinks bestest, we'll only have Pinkie and Jack."

"But what'll make it Eliza's party?"

"Why, we'll ask each child to bring a doll or something, so's to be comp'ny for her."

"Boys can't bring dolls."

"I know; I'm thinking. Well, the boys can bring Teddy bears, or rocking horses or anything that isn't alive, and that part of it'll be 'Liza's party, and the people part will be ours."

"Sounds good enough. Where'll we have it?"

"Here, of course; in the playground. We'll fix it all up partified, and have Japanese lanterns and everything."

"We can't have 'em lighted. It'll have to be a daytime party."

"I don't know. Maybe auntie will let us have it 'four to seven.' We can light the lanterns by six. It's 'most dark then."

"All right. Let's go ask her now, 'fore we plan any further. It'd be horrid to get it all fixed up and then have her say 'No.'"

The twins clasped hands and ran toward the house. Dolly's golden tangle of curls bobbed up and down in the breeze, and Dick's dark ringlets clustered tighter on his brow, as his face flushed with the exercise, but they ran evenly and swiftly together, keeping perfect step as they flew over the ground.

Bang! In at the library door they went, and tumbled upon Aunt Rachel, who sat in her usual chair, placidly holding her hands.

"Oh, Auntie, may we——" gasped Dick, and, "Oh, Auntie, the loveliest plan!" panted Dolly, when they suddenly realised their aunt was not alone.

A lady was calling, a lady very much dressed up and formal-looking, who eyed the children with some severity and much curiosity.

But Dick and Dolly had not proved dull pupils in the matter of etiquette as taught in Heatherton households. By no means. As quickly as a soldier stands "at attention," they stood up straight, advanced decorously to the lady, and Dolly made her most careful courtesy, while Dick bowed correctly.

"How do you do, Mrs. Witherbee?" they said, in decorous tones, and though they were flushed and warm from their run, and just the least mite out of breath, they reflected no discredit on their aunts by boisterous or informal behaviour.

Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie sat proudly watching them, silently grateful for the twins' exhibition of good manners, for Heatherton matrons were critical of other people's children, and Mrs. Witherbee was one of the most particular of all.

"You may go," said Aunt Rachel to the twins, after they had been duly questioned by the visitor, and with proper ceremonies of farewell, the twins noiselessly left the room.

"Well, I 'spect we behaved all right that time," said Dick, as they strolled back to the garden.

"Yes, I promised Aunt Rachel I'd 'member my manners carefuller 'n ever. She does love to have us be polite."

"I know it; and it isn't much trouble, after you get used to it."

It seemed as if Mrs. Witherbee never would finish her call, but it was really only about ten minutes later, when the twins saw her carriage drive away. Again they raced to the house, this time to find the aunties alone and expecting them.

"Well, what's it all about?" said Miss Abbie, after both ladies had been treated to a fine

demonstration of regard and esteem.

"Why, we want to have a party," began Dick.

"For Lady Eliza," broke in Dolly; "she's never had a party, and she'd just love one. How many do you think we'd better ask?"

"A party! For Eliza!" said Aunt Rachel, helplessly. "What do you mean?"

"Yes, a party. Girls and boys, you know, and Teddy Bears, and dolls, and everybody bring something."

"Bring something! to eat?" exclaimed Aunt Abbie, in dismay, for it sounded like a general picnic.

"Oh, no, not to eat!" explained Dolly; "but to be company for Eliza, 'cause it's her party. And if you say so, we'll only have Pinkie and Jack, but we'd like to have more."

"Tell us about it more slowly," suggested Aunt Abbie; "and don't both talk at once."

"You tell, Dick," said Dolly. "You can talk slower 'n I can."

"Well," said Dick, "we thought it would be fun to have a party of about a dozen boys and girls, but have it for Lady Eliza's party,—just for fun, you know."

"And what's this about bears?"

"Yes; have each boy and girl bring a doll or a bear, or a hobby horse or a Jack-in-the-box, or anything like that, so it will be Eliza's party too."

"Oh, I begin to see," said Aunt Rachel. "I like the party idea; I've been thinking you children might have a little party. But the Eliza part of it is crazy."

"Oh, no, it isn't, Auntie," said Dolly, who was patting her aunt on both cheeks as she talked. "You see, all the boys and girls love Lady Eliza 'most as much as we do. And they'd be glad to have it be her party, too."

"Well, we'll have to talk it over, and see about it," said Miss Rachel; "but now it's time for you to run and get ready for tea."

"All right, Auntie. But *do* decide soon, for Eliza is *so* impatient to know."

"Tell her she'll have to wait, Dolly. But I'll let her know by to-morrow, if that will do."

"Yes, Auntie, that will do, I'm sure;" and with a final pat and a kiss, Dolly skipped away.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BIG CHIEF

After further discussion, and some coaxing on the part of the twins, Miss Rachel decided that the party, though of course for Dick and Dolly, might be nominally for Lady Eliza. And so they made up an invitation like this, and Miss Abbie wrote them in her neat hand:

Miss Dolly Dana
Master Dick Dana
and
Lady Eliza Dusenbury
request the pleasure of
Miss Phyllis Middleton's
company
on Thursday afternoon
from four to seven o'clock
at Dana Dene.
You are invited to bring a friend whose
company will be congenial to
the Lady Eliza.

"Aren't they the greatest ever!" exclaimed Dick, dancing about the table where Aunt Abbie was writing the notes.

"I doubt if those who are invited will know what that last clause means," said Aunt Abbie.

"Oh, yes, they will, for we'll tell them," said Dolly. "Of course we'll see them all between now and the party. There's a whole week, you know. I'll tell every one to bring a doll or something for Eliza's part of the party. And she must have a new dress, auntie."

"Yes; something gay and festive, of course. What would you like?"

"Pink tarlatan," said Dolly, promptly. "With lots of ruffles, and a lace bertha, and a pink sash, and let her wear my pink coral beads. Oh, Auntie! won't she look just sweet!"

"And flowers in her hair," chimed in Dick; "and a big, big bouquet, in her hand. Whew! She'll be a stunner!"

As tarlatan was an inexpensive material, and easy to make up, Aunt Abbie humoured Dolly's whim, and Lady Eliza had a beautiful new frock for the occasion.

Dolly herself picked out just the right shade of watermelon pink, and she helped a little, too, gathering flounces, and running up breadths, but Aunt Abbie made most of the pretty gown, and it didn't take very long either.

It was to be worn over one of Aunt Abbie's own lace-trimmed petticoats, and two whole days before the party, Eliza was dressed and set away in the guest room to await the hour.

"I believe I'll send an invitation to Aunt Nine," said Dolly, as they were making out the list of those who were to be invited. "I don't s'pose she could come, but I think it would be nice to ask her, don't you, Aunt Rachel?"

"Why, yes, dear; send one, if you like. Though, as you say, of course she won't come, yet I think she'll appreciate your thought of her."

So one invitation was sent to Miss Penninah Dana, and twelve more were sent to boys and girls in Heatherton.

Every one of the dozen accepted, and after conversation on the subject with Dick and Dolly, they quite understood about the extra guests they were to bring.

But they were very secret about them.

"I won't tell you," said Jack Fuller, giggling, "but I'm going to bring the funniest person you ever saw! Oh, I know Lady Eliza will be pleased!"

And Pinkie declared that her guest would be the "belle of the ball."

All these secrets greatly whetted the twins' curiosity, and they could think of nothing but the coming party. A few days before the event they received a letter from Aunt Penninah, expressing her regret that she could not be with them. In it was also a letter addressed to Lady Eliza Dusenbury. Chuckling with glee, the twins tore it open and read:

"LADY ELIZA DUSENBURY:

"Most charming and beautiful lady, I salute you. To your party I come, and there with you at Dana Dene will I ever after remain. As your friend and protector I will stand ever by your side. Unless, however, you should attack me with a carving knife (as is sometimes your playful habit), in which case, I will run away and never return. Expect me on Thursday, by express. Your true friend,

"SASKATCHEWAN."

"Oh," cried Dick, "it's an Indian doll! Saskatchewan is an Indian name, you know. Won't it be fun?"

"Yes," cried his twin. "And do you suppose Aunt Nine dressed it herself, in wigwam and feathers?"

"Ho, ho! Dolly. You mean wampum, not wigwam!"

"Well, it's all the same; I don't care. Oh, I wish Saskatchewan would come. I'm crazy to see him!"

"So'm I. Do you s'pose the box'll come addressed to Lady Eliza Dusenbury, Dana Dene?"

"No, I guess it'll be addressed to Aunt Rachel, or maybe to us. What does Dene mean, auntie?"

"Dene?"

"Yes, Dana Dene, you know?"

"Why, Dana Dene is the name of our place, you know. Not only the house, but the whole estate."

"Yes'm; I know it. But what does Dene mean? Just as a word?"

"Oh, well, it doesn't mean anything nowadays, just as a word. But in old times, long ago, it meant den or cave."

"Well, this house isn't a cave."

"No," said Miss Rachel, laughing. "We're not cave-dwellers. But long ago, there was another house where this stands now. You know, this estate has been in our family for many generations."

"And was the other house a cave?" asked Dick, with vague visions of primitive ancestors floating through his mind.

"No, of course not! The name cave came from the fact that there was a deep den or cave somewhere on the place."

“Where is it?”

“I don’t know, Dicky. It may be only tradition, or there may have been a real cave, now filled up or covered over. I suppose it is in the woodland part, if it’s anywhere.”

“But it must be somewhere, Aunt Rachel,” persisted Dick. “If they, my great-grand-fathers, I mean, named the place Dana Dene because of a big den, the den must be here yet.”

“Well, perhaps it is, child, but it hasn’t been seen or heard of for many years, anyway. You may hunt for it, if you like, but I doubt if you’ll find it.”

“Come on Dollums,” cried Dick, jumping up. “Let’s go and look for it. It would be lots of fun if we could find it in time for the party!”

“Indeed it would not!” returned their aunt. “Find it if you want to, but don’t play in it on the day of the party. I’d like you to keep yourselves tidy on that occasion, and not go burrowing in caves. But I’ve no idea you’ll find it. For, a cave that hasn’t been used for over a hundred years, is likely to be filled up with earth and leaves. It has, probably, entirely disappeared.”

“Well, we’ll have the fun of hunting,” said Dick, and away went the twins on their new quest.

Michael and Pat were first interviewed.

“Did you ever see a cave or a den anywhere about the place?” they inquired.

“Cave, is it?” said Michael. “Faith an’ I didn’t. Whativer are yez up to now?”

“Oh, think!” cried Dick, impatiently. “Didn’t you see one, Pat, when you were mowing the grass, or anything like that? Digging, you know.”

“I did not. There’s no cave around these diggin’s, unless so be it’s in the woods. There may be a dozen caves in thimsix acres of woodland.”

The twins were disappointed. It seemed a forlorn hope to try to investigate six acres of doubtful territory.

“But do yez go and look,” said Michael. “It’s jist what ye need to use up yer extry energy. Yer so cockylorum about yer party, that ye need a scape valve fer yer overflowin’ sperrits. Go, now, an’ hunt yer cave.”

“Come on, Dolly,” said Dick. “We can’t do anything for the party, there’s nothing for us to do. So we may as well go to the woods.”

“All right. I’d just as lieve go, and if the cave is there, I should think we’d see it.”

“Av coorse ye will,” said Michael, grinning. “First, ye’ll see a signboard, wid a finger pointien’ ‘This way to the Big Cave,’ thin ye go right along to the entrance.”

“An’ pay yer quarter to the gateman, an’ walk in,” supplemented Pat.

The twins never minded the good-natured chaff of these two Irishmen, and they only laughed, as hand in hand they trotted away.

They had been often to the wood, but heretofore they had noticed only the trees and the stones and the low-growing vegetation. Now they carefully examined the formation of the ground, and any suspicious-looking hollow or mound.

“Maybe it was a smuggler’s cave,” said Dick, “and in it perhaps are lots of things they smuggled and hid away.”

“Yes, I s’pect so,” said Dolly, who was of an amiable nature, and quite willing to agree with Dick’s opinions, whenever she had no knowledge to the contrary.

“Or maybe it’s a fairy cave,” she added. “That would be more likely, ’cause I think these are awful fairyish woods.”

“Why do you? You’ve never seen a fairy in ’em.”

“No, but I ’most have. I’ve seen lots of places where they come out and dance at night.

Pinkie shows 'em to me."

"Pooh, she doesn't know for sure."

"No, not for sure. Nobody does. But she says most prob'ly that's where they dance. Do fairies ever live in caves, Dick?"

"Not 'zactly fairies. But dwarfs do, and gnomes and things like that?"

"Sprites?"

"Yes, I guess so. And brownies,—real brownies, I mean; not the picture-book kind. Hello, Doll, here's a place that looks cavy!"

Dick paused before a rough mass of soil and stones and mossy overgrowth, that did seem to bear some resemblance to the blocked-up mouth of a cave.

But it was just as much like a mere natural formation of ground, and after digging and poking around with sticks, the children concluded it was not a cave, after all.

"Oh, pshaw, we'll never find a real cave, Dick; let's go home. I'm getting hungry."

"So'm I. We can come back and hunt some other time. Aunt Rachel wouldn't let us play in it on party day, anyway."

So back they went, and no one seemed surprised that they hadn't discovered a long-forgotten cave, perhaps full of hidden treasure.

The day before the party, Aunt Rachel and Aunt Abbie drove to town to order the feast from the caterer's.

The twins accompanied them, for the selection of the goodies was to be partly left to their choice.

The caterer's was a fascinating place, and Dick and Dolly exercised great care and discretion in choosing the prettiest forms for the ices, and the loveliest kinds of little fancy cakes, and the gayest sort of snapping crackers.

The sandwiches and lemonade would be made at home, but all the rest of the feast must be ordered, and Dick and Dolly were overwhelmed with delight, as the aunties kept on adding bonbons, fruits, nuts, and all sorts of delectable things to the long list.

"We never had such lovely parties at Auntie Helen's," said Dick, reminiscently, as they drove home.

"We never had a real party there, anyway," rejoined Dilly; "just only little play-teas of an afternoon. This is different."

"Yes," said Miss Rachel, complacently, "this is a real party. It will be one of the prettiest children's parties ever given in Heatherton. That is, if your foolish Eliza performance doesn't spoil it."

"Oh, that won't spoil it, auntie," said Dolly, confidently; "that will only make it nicer."

"Sure!" said Dick. "Just a boys' and girls' party wouldn't be near so much fun. Why, Auntie, Bob Hollister says he's going to bring his Punch and Judy, and Lucy Hollister has an awful big rag doll she's going to bring."

"I think it will be funny," said Aunt Abbie. "But you must leave all those creatures out in the playground when you come in to supper."

"Yes'm, we will," agreed the twins.

The very morning of the party day an immense box came by express.

"Shure, it's a big sofy, like your aunts has in the droring-room," said Michael, as he and Pat helped the expressman to take it from the wagon.

"No, it's Saskatchewan!" shrieked Dick and Dolly, as they danced round the box in glee. "Open it, Michael; oh, do hurry up!"

"Arrah, now, wait till I can get me sledgehammer," and Michael went to the tool-house for his strongest tools.

But after some diligent prying and hammering, the box was opened, and buried in a nest of old newspaper and excelsior, was "Big Chief Saskatchewan," as a card tied to his wrist announced.

And if you please, instead of an Indian *doll*, he was a big wooden Indian, of the kind that stands out in front of cigar stores. The children screamed with glee, and even Michael and Pat exclaimed in admiration as the heavy figure was finally set upright on his own wheeled pedestal.

"Where do you suppose she ever got it?" said Aunt Rachel, as the two aunts came out to view the new arrival.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Miss Abbie, "but he does make a fine companion for Lady Eliza."

Saskatchewan, though a trifle weather-worn, was not marred or broken, and the bundle of cigars had been cut away from his hand, and instead, he held an Indian basket. But this was removable, and the twins saw at once that they could put anything into his outstretched hand, from a tomahawk to a pipe of peace. His blanket wrapped round him was painted gorgeous red and yellow, and high-standing feathers surmounted his noble brow. His expression was ferocious, but that was Indian nature, and Dick and Dolly were so delighted with their new toy, that they embraced him with the same vigorous affection they often showed their aunts. Then, clasping hands with the aunties, the four danced round Saskatchewan and bade him welcome to Dana Dene.

The Indian was too heavy to be moved around much though he could be dragged, owing to the casters on the pedestal. But Aunt Rachel said she thought he'd better be placed in the playground as a permanent inhabitant thereof. For wind and weather would not hurt him, as it would the more delicate Lady Eliza.

So Michael and Pat trundled the chief off to the playground, followed by the admiring family.

He was given a choice position in a pleasant corner, and the twins said they would build a bower over him some day.

"But we must make it big enough for two," said Dolly, "so Lady Eliza can stand beside him to receive their guests."

"All right," agreed Dick. "But I wish we could have it for this afternoon. They'd look lovely under a bower."

"So ye shall, thin," said Michael. "Me an' Pat, we'll fix ye up a timporary bower, that'll gladden the eyes of ye,—that we will."

So, the two kind-hearted men, anxious to please the children, hastily erected a "bower" by making an arch of two-foot width "chicken-wire." This, when decorated with vines and flowers, was as pretty a bower as one would wish to see, and Saskatchewan was placed beneath it, or rather the bower was built over the Indian, where he stood awaiting the Lady Eliza.

CHAPTER XX

A GAY PARTY

After dinner, the final preparations for the party were made.

The day was perfect, bright with sunshine, and not too warm.

Lady Eliza was taken out to the playground and introduced to her new companion.

Her large blue eyes showed no especial emotion as she was placed beside him, under the bower, nor did Saskatchewan seem at all embarrassed by the presence of the lovely lady.

Eliza, in her ruffled pink tarlatan, and wreath of pink blossoms, was a charming creature indeed, and she held gracefully a massive bouquet, tied with pink ribbons, while her cavalier, held his Indian basket, which had also been filled with flowers.

So entrancing were the pair, that Dick and Dolly could scarcely leave them, to go and get on their own party raiment.

The playground, of course, had been specially adorned for the occasion.

Japanese lanterns hung from the trees, and rugs were laid here and there, extra seats were provided, and everything was decked with flowers and made gay with flags and bunting.

Truly, the Dana ladies knew how to arrange a gala occasion, and this bade fair to be a fine one.

The twins at last scampered back to the house to dress, and Dolly was beautifully arrayed in a new white frock of fine muslin and a broad Roman sash.

Her curls were tied up with a Roman ribbon to match, and white stockings and white slippers completed her costume.

Dick, too, had a new summer suit, and the twins promised the aunties not to roll on the grass or do anything naughty or ridiculous.

"I know you mean to do just right," said Aunt Rachel, as she kissed the two beaming little faces, "but you know, you 'don't think,' and then you cut up some absurd dido, that makes a lot of trouble."

The twins vowed they *would* think, and they would *not* "cut up didoes," and then they danced away to receive their guests, for it was nearly four o'clock. Pinkie came first, of course.

She brought her biggest wax doll, which she had dressed up as a fairy. The doll had a spangled white tulle frock on, and gauzy wings, and a gilt paper crown, sparkling with diamond-dust. She carried a long gilt wand, and was really a beautiful fairy.

A row of seats had been placed for Lady Eliza's guests, and the fairy was the first to be seated there. Jack Fuller came next, and he brought a funny creature, which his mother had fashioned for him out of a feather bolster. She had tied a string about it to form a head, and this, covered with a pillowcase, had features worked in it with colored embroidery cotton. Then the doll was dressed in a white dress of Mrs. Fuller's, and a huge frilled sunbonnet adorned its head. Jack came, lugging his somewhat unwieldy guest, and the bolster lady was made to bow politely to Lady Eliza.

"Why! who's that?" exclaimed Jack, looking with admiration at the wooden Indian.

"That's Big Chief Saskatchewan," announced Dick, proudly. "He's ours. Aunt Nine sent him to us. Isn't he great?"

"Gorgeous!" assented Jack. "How do you like Betty Bolster?"

"Oh, she's just lovely," declared Dolly, kissing Betty's soft, white cheek. "Set her down

there, next to Pinkie's fairy." Then the other children began to flock in.

Maddy Lester brought a big Teddy bear, with a huge ribbon tied round his neck, and a bunch of flowers held in his paw. He made profound obeisance to Lady Eliza and her friend, and then he was seated next to Betty Bolster.

Clifford Lester had a fine personage to introduce as his guest. He had taken his father's clothes-tree, and on the top had fastened a smiling mask and a wig made of curled hair. This he had dressed up in some nondescript garments, and though the strange-looking lady could not sit down, she stood beautifully, and seemed quite worthy of Lady Eliza's approval.

One boy brought a rocking-horse, and one a 'possum.

Roguish Lily Craig brought a Jack-in-the-box, which she sprang in the very face of Lady Eliza and the Big Chief, without, however, scaring them a mite.

The Punch and Judy, too, created great amusement, and Spencer Nash raised shouts of laughter, when he arrived, proudly carrying a scarecrow from his father's cornfield.

This scarecrow was of the conventional type, with flapping coat tails, and old, soft felt hat, jammed down over his face.

When all had arrived, the fourteen children were in gales of merriment at the strange collection of creatures that made up Lady Eliza's part of the party, and they made a procession to march round the grounds.

Saskatchewan was too heavy to travel, so they left him standing guard, but took lovely Lady Eliza, who was easily carried by two of the boys.

The reviewing stand was the front veranda, where the two aunties sat, and greatly did they enjoy the parade that came rollicking, frolicking by.

Then the guests, both animate and inanimate, went into the big parlour for a dance. Aunt Abbie played the piano, and though some of the children had been to dancing school, many had not, and the dance was really more of a frolic.

The scarecrow, carried by Spencer Nash, politely asked Lady Eliza to be his partner, and Dolly, in behalf of the lady, consented. So these two, assisted by Spencer and Dolly, took their places, and opposite them were the clothes-tree lady and the big Teddy bear, each guided in their steps by their laughing owners.

Bolster Betty was partner to Jack-in-the-box, and the fairy danced with the 'possum.

Aunt Rachel guided the uncertain figures of this quadrille, and the others all danced round as they chose. Then, fearing the new member of the Dana family would be lonesome, they all trooped back to the playground, where Saskatchewan stood, meekly holding his basket of flowers.

"You dear old thing!" cried Dolly, throwing her arms round him. "Did we leave you all alone? Well, here we are back again, and now we'll play with you."

So they played "Copenhagen," and "Oats, Peas, Beans, and Barley Grows," and as Lady Eliza's guests were chosen to step inside the ring, their absurd appearance made uproarious fun and laughter.

Then, by way of quieting them down, Aunt Abbie suggested that all the dolls and bears be set aside, while the children played some games by themselves.

So, ranged in a semicircle, the queer guests sat or stood on either side of Lady Eliza's bower, and the children grouped themselves on the rugs on the ground.

First, Aunt Abbie read them one or two lovely stories, and then she proposed some guessing games and some forfeit games, and it was six o'clock before they knew it.

So then it was time for the feast, and, leaving Lady Eliza and the Big Chief to entertain their

guests, Dick and Dolly led their own guests to the house.

The dining-room table, extended to its full length, was a gay and festive sight. In the centre was a big pyramid, built of macaroons and fancy cakes and bonbons, and surmounted by a sugar Cupid holding a big red balloon by its string.

At every plate was a little sugar figure, bird or animal, holding the string of a red balloon, and the balloons, themselves bobbing above the table, made a jolly effect.

The two aunties assisted Delia and Hannah to wait on the guests, whose appetites proved to be of the normal nine-year-old variety. Sandwiches disappeared as if by magic; chicken croquettes seemed to meet with general approval, and lemonade was willingly accepted.

Then the ice cream came, in the various shapes that Dick and Dolly had selected,—a different design for each one. Pinkie had a fairy, of course. Jack Fuller, an automobile, because he was so anxious for his father to get one.

Spencer Nash had a fish, because he liked to go fishing, and Maddy Lester a boat, because she loved the water. Each had some appropriate joke or allusion, and, as the fun was appreciated, the ices were all the more enjoyed.

Cakes and bonbons followed, and, last of all, the snapping German crackers.

These each held a tissue paper cap, which was donned by its owner, and Dolly's little Dutch bonnet proved becoming to her rosy face and sunny curls.

Pinkie's was a crown, and after it was put in place, Aunt Rachel declared she looked like a fairy herself. The boys had sailor caps, and soldier caps, and Scotch caps, and when all were be-hatted, they adjourned to the parlour for a final game.

This proved to be "Stick and Ball."

From the middle of the wide arched doorway hung, suspended by a single cord, a large ball, apparently of white paper. A long, light stick or wand, was supplied by Aunt Abbie, who then blindfolded one of the little girls, and asked her to take the wand, turn round three times, and then hit at the ball.

Geraldine did so, but by the time she had turned three times, she was standing almost with her back toward the ball, though she didn't know it.

So, when she struck, she hit only empty air.

A shout of laughter arose, but the children were surprised to find, as one after another tried it, that it was far from easy, to turn three times, and then stand facing in the right direction.

So it was not until nearly all had attempted it, that at last one of the boys hit the ball a smart, sharp, *whack!* which burst the paper, and down tumbled a lot of neat white paper parcels tied with red ribbons.

A name was written on each, and as the children scrambled for them, they were quickly exchanged until each had his or her own. The parcels contained pretty little gifts which were souvenirs of the party to take home.

Though not of great value, they were all attractive presents, and the young guests were greatly pleased.

The party was over now, except for one last visit to the playground to recover their dolls and strange creatures who still waited out there. But as they neared the spot, a delighted "Oh!" burst from the children.

Michael had lighted the Japanese lanterns and turned the place into what looked like fairy-land.

It was dark now, and the lanterns cast shadows of Lady Eliza and her guests, as well as of the trees and hedges.

"Isn't it beautiful!" whispered Pinkie to Dolly. "I wish we could stay here awhile."

"We can't," returned Dolly. "Aunt Rachel says it's too damp to stay out here in the evening. So she just let us have the lanterns lighted for a few minutes to see how pretty it is."

"It's lovely!" declared everybody.

And Dick said, "Perhaps in summer, when it's real warm, we can stay out here after dark, and have the lanterns again."

The twins put this question to Aunt Rachel, after all the party guests had gone home.

"Perhaps," she replied, "when it's really warm weather. But now, you must scurry to bed, and we'll discuss the subject some other time."

"But we must bring in Lady Eliza," said Dick, and with Michael's help, Lady Eliza, with her pretty pink frock and ribbons quite unharmed, came smilingly in at the front door.

But Big Chief Saskatchewan stood grimly on guard, all through the night, looking steadily ahead at the stars just above the horizon, and holding firmly his Indian basket of gay blossoms.

THE END

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Transcriber's Notes:

Hyphenation has been retained as in the original. Punctuation has been corrected without note. Other errors have been corrected as noted below:

page 22, their seevrity, yet now ==> their [severity](#), yet now
page 79, and he consideerd it his ==> and he [considered](#) it his
page 140, too creap for this ==> too [cheap](#) for this
page 144, "Yes, I'll help yez ==> "[Yis](#), I'll help yez
page 157, little voice sad: ==> little voice [said](#):
page 182, and ran of errands, ==> and ran [lots](#) of errands,
page 208, Eliza's difficult transportantion ==> Eliza's difficult [transportation](#)
page 209, I'll have getttin' ==> I'll have [gettin'](#)
page 260, when the suddenly ==> when [they](#) suddenly
page 268, suppose Aune Nine ==> suppose [Aunt](#) Nine
page 293, journey to Hapyyland ==> journey to [Happyland](#)

[The end of *Dick and Dolly* by Carolyn Wells]