

# THE FARM'S LITTLE PEOPLE



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# THE FARM'S LITTLE PEOPLE

*Sequel to "On Grandfather's Farm"*

BY  
ANNIE HOWELLS FRÉCHETTE



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From the Society's own Press

## To the Memory

*Of my dear father and sister Victoria*

and

*To my cherished sister Aurelia  
The one left of the loving three who made  
us so happy on "Grandfather's Farm"*

## CONTENTS

THE RAM-CAT'S KITTENS.. [7](#)

HOLLYHOCK LADIES..... [39](#)

ARE THERE FAIRIES?..... [61](#)

THE PARTY..... [85](#)

## THE RAM-CAT'S KITTENS

# THE FARM'S LITTLE PEOPLE

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## THE RAM-CAT'S KITTENS



HAT do you s'pose that noise upstairs is, Sister?" and Brother's eyes opened wide and his yellow hair did its best to stand on end.

"It sounds like something scratching," answered Sister, with her head turned to listen toward the loft.

"Do you think it is a panther?" in an awful whisper.

"No, I don't. In the first place there are no panthers on grandfather's farm, and in the second place, if it was a panther it would have eaten Randolph and Beverly last night, and I've seen them going to the field this morning, so they are not eaten. And besides, Brother, you are too big a boy to be afraid of a little noise like that."

"I didn't say I was afraid."

"But you looked afraid. I do wish, Brother," and here Sister stood upright as if to lecture in the oatbin where she and Brother were playing mill, "that you would get over that habit you have of trying to get out of things. It is just as bad to look scared as to be scared, and you can't fool me. You know mamma says you have a 'speaking countenance,' and that it always tells just what you are thinking about."

"Can you tell by looking at my cheeks?"

"Yes, even by looking at your nose."

"That's funny," and Brother laughed, glad to talk about something else.

"So if you want to prove to me that you are not afraid, you ought to go upstairs and see what is scratching."

"I'm not afraid," and Brother scrambled out of the bin, and started for the steep little stair which led to the loft.

These two little people of six and seven were spending a most happy summer on their grandfather's farm, a fine old place in Virginia. Just now they were playing in one of the group of log houses which had been "the quarters" in slavery times, the lower floor of which was sometimes used to store extra grain, while the upper part of the cabin was used as a bedroom for the two colored boys. A great bin was found to be a most desirable place in which to play, and many a salt-bag of oats was loaded into the express wagon and drawn to a make-believe mill in another corner, sister becoming at once both

horse and driver, and Brother placing himself at the mill, where he took the grist with a loud and gruff voice—as became a dusty miller who was always at work among rumbling wheels and stones.

At the foot of the stairs Brother paused.

“I’m not at all afraid, you know, Sister, but even when I’m upstairs maybe I can’t find out. You’d better come with me. You know I can’t tell very well. I might think it was Bingo, or an old hen making a nest on the boys’ bed. I might—why, Sister, it’s the ram-cat!” And there sure enough was “the ram-cat” (so called because of gray marks on each side of her head, which the children declared looked like the horns of a ram) peering over the side of the stair.

“Oh, Brother, wait for me. I’m sure the ram-cat has a nest in the loft. How perfectly lovely!” and Sister went over the side of the bin in double-quick time.

Up the stairs they flew, forgetful of panthers or danger of any kind. The ram-cat met them and rubbed against them in a friendly way.

“Rammy, dear, have you a nest?” and Sister stooped to stroke her, while Brother began peering about. “Have you kittens, Rammy?”

“Rammy” only twisted herself around Sister’s thin legs and pushed against her bare feet with velvety paws. She was not a house cat like Pooley, still she was on very good and gentle terms with the children, who often brought her tempting little dinners. She even had a frolic with them at times, a thing which stately Pooley never did, for Pooley never even stayed with any one but grandfather. Now it had long been one of their fondest hopes that some day the ram-cat would, as they termed it, “hatch kittens,” for there were many plays in which kittens could take part, and a “flock” of them would be a far lovelier sight than any flock of downy chickens. Little chickens were beautiful enough, but even Brother feared the claws of the mother hen too much ever to pick up a chick, and as for Sister, she would go far out of her path any day, rather than meet Mistress Speck and her brood. So little chickens did not count for much.

Once more a little scraping sound was heard, and this time there was with it a faint but real mewing, which seemed to come from an old barrel which stood half hidden under the eaves. The children made a rush toward it and the ram-cat followed them uneasily. Brother tilted himself over the barrel and looked down into it. He tilted himself so far that Sister had to grasp him around the chubby calves to keep him from tumbling in altogether. She could hear him breathing hard, but it was a moment of such intensity, that neither could speak. Then Brother wriggled himself out until his toes touched the

floor; then his head appeared; then out came his arms—and in each hand he grasped a soft, roly-poly kitten.

“Take them, Sister, and I’ll get the rest; the barrel’s ‘most full of them.”

Sister took them into the doubled-up skirt of her dress in perfect silence, and Brother again tilted himself into the barrel, Sister solemnly holding him by one leg with her free hand; coming out he silently put two more kittens into her skirt and once more half of him was lost to view. This time only one kitten was fished up.

“I thought there were more,” he said, in deep disappointment.

“You said the barrel was ‘most full, Brother,” mournfully.

“Well, Sister, truly and truly it did seem ‘most full. They must have kept crawling up the sides and tumbling back,” and poor little Brother was mortified that his treasury should so soon become empty.

“Well, never mind, we can get along with five,” and then Sister’s joy began to overflow. “Thank you, thank you, for getting them out of the barrel; I never could have got them out!”

“I’m so glad I happen to be a boy, ‘cause boys can get kittens out of barrels better than girls can, ‘cause they are not afraid of tearing their dresses, that’s the only reason. Are they beauties, Sister?” beaming at her.

“Perfect little loves! They are squirming ‘round like little angels. Peep in at them,” and she opened a fold of her skirt. “We’ll own them together, won’t we? Let’s go down to the bin and put them on the floor, so we can see them all at once. It will be better than playing mill.”

“And we can train them, and have a circus.”

“Yes, and now that the ram-cat has hatched kittens, I just believe that old Charley will hatch a Shetland pony.”

“I believe he’ll hatch two,” said Brother, who always liked to have things complete. “Let me carry some of them.”

“Yes, take one in each hand, but do be careful not to drop them.”

Down they went with their precious load, the ram-cat coming as a jealous rear guard, and into the bin they laboriously climbed. Once safely within, Sister’s skirt was emptied and a soft wad of kittenhood put upon the floor. To the excited children it seemed to combine all the colors of the rainbow, and long and lovingly was it looked over. By turns they decided that the beauty of the family was the all-white one—the gray one—and each of the cunning

white ones with gray spots. Brother wanted to begin their training at once, but their legs were so weak and their bodies so pudgy, that both Sister and the mother protested in their different ways, and the kittens were put to sleep in a corner of the bin.

But trained cats they were to be, sooner or later, and the little busybodies after kissing the soft heap, betook themselves to the labor of making the place clean and tidy, for future performances. Old brooms were brought in, and such a cloud of dust was raised that they seemed to recede from each other into dim distance.



After sweeping, seats were set for the audience which was to consist of grandfather, the aunts, and mamma. Joey Vale was to be asked to assist in the ring; and if Bingo and the ram-cat could be coaxed to be friendly enough, he too would add to the attractions of the arena.



When all was done they once more climbed back into the bin to feast their eyes upon the kittens and to rest themselves.

"Shall we tell about them when we go to dinner, or shall we keep them for a surprise?"



"To-morrow is Aunt Leashie's birthday; we might make her a present of them," said Sister.

"But you know Aunt Leashie does not like cats. She even calls Pooley a beast."



"Well, she is a beast."

"But I don't think she ought to be called one—and right before grandfather too," protested Brother.

"Well then, perhaps Aunt Leashie would not like them, so we'll keep them for a surprise. And when we have trained them to jump over sticks and ride on Bingo's back, and stand on their hind legs and mew 'Home Sweet Home,' like the trained dogs——"



"Only the dogs bark it."

"Oh, well, that's because they can't mew—and when they can jump through hoops and wear little dresses and coats like monkeys, we'll give a circus, and won't everybody be 'stonished? How proud the ram-cat will be of her children. Oh,

dear, I hear Bingo coming! Now, they will fight and step on the kittens and kill them! Do run, Brother, and shut him into the barn. It is the only chance to save their lives, the dear wee things. Go away, you wicked dog!” Bingo at this moment came rushing into the cabin and hearing the children talking in the bin, peered over at them with a series of joyful little yelps, and made as if to jump over to them.

“Bingo,” said Brother sternly, “go to the house this minute.”

“Oh, dear, dear! I can almost hear their poor little bones being crunched. Oh, look at Rammy’s tail!” and Sister spread her skirts over the tempting morsels, and the mother cat glared with fiery eyes at the good-natured pup. “Oh, Brother, if you don’t get the awful monster away, we’ll all be killed—they’ll tear us to pieces between them.”

Valiant Brother scrambled out, took the joyous Bingo by the nape of the neck, and by coaxing and cuffing at last did get him outside, and Sister hurried after them, closing the door carefully.

“I’ve left the sweet darlings asleep in the bin with their kind mother to protect them. What a narrow escape! Bingo, if you had pounced upon them, I’d—I’d——”

Bingo stood before her asking with his eyes what she would have done, but as she seemed unable to think and remained silent, he presently gave a gruff bark and pretended to attack her, by flattening himself upon the ground, then suddenly springing up and circling around her. This was always a challenge for a grand romp and the children could not resist him.

“We may as well play with him awhile,” said Sister, “and get his mind off the kittens.”

Not only was Bingo’s mind diverted, but they played themselves into complete forgetfulness as well. When they were called to dinner they found Aunt Sie planning a trip to a farm near by, and they were asked to go along. Invitations were seldom thrown away on them, and after dinner, each holding dear Aunt Sie’s hand, they started off.

It was only when they were well on their way that the helpless state of their treasure recurred to Sister.

“We must go back—we must go back this very minute!” she cried, coming to a dead halt.

“Why must you go back?” asked Aunt Sie in surprise.

“Oh, Aunt Sie, it was a secret, but now you’ll never, never see them, Bingo

will eat them all!” and Sister burst into tears.

“And he can gulp ’em right down—they are so soft,” added Brother in a trembling voice.

“Eat what? Gulp what down?”

“We may as well tell, Brother—the circus is all over—we won’t even have a funeral if he eats them,” said Sister.

“Well, you are puzzling children!”

“K-k-kittens, Aunt Sie.”

“The—the—ram-cat has five kittens.”

“Well, that is a calamity,” exclaimed their aunt. “Five more cats to feed!”

“And Bingo knows about them——”

“And he ‘most ate them before dinner.”

“Well, he won’t ‘most eat them after dinner if the ram-cat is around.”

“Oh, won’t she let him? Will she spag him?” they both cried in a breath.

“Spag him! Well, all I have to say is, that if Bingo tries to eat the ram-cat’s kittens, there won’t be more than the tip of his tail left!”

“Oh, goody! Will there be only about an inch of his tail left, Aunt Sie? Show me on your finger,” urged exact Brother. “Aren’t you glad, Sister?”

Their weeping was turned to laughter as they seized each other and broke into a “joyful dance.”

The sun was just setting when they reached home, warm and tired, and a hasty search was made for the downy mass they had left in the oatbin. To their horror they found the bin empty; but as there was no sign of bloodshed, they dared hope there had been no battle between Bingo and the ram-cat.

“Maybe, Sister,” and Brother’s face glowed with hope, “maybe their mother thought they were to sleep upstairs. You know at home Tibbie always used to carry hers out to the shed in her mouth.”

Upstairs trotted the tired little legs and there, sure enough, in the barrel lay the ram-cat surrounded by her family. It was too dark to see distinctly, but Brother made sure they were all there by feeling and counting each sharp little tail. Once he shouted up from the depth of the barrel that there were six, but a recount proved to him that he had gotten hold of the same tail twice.

"I wish, Brother, you'd be careful not to make such mistakes. All in a minute I thought how beautiful three pairs of kittens would look galloping around the ring; and it is so disappointing to have to get used to two pairs and a half again."

"Well, I'm awful sorry, Sister; but you see I could not help it—they squirmed so. They probably thought I was a bad boy and meant to lift them by their tails. But you know I wouldn't do such a wicked thing, eh, Sister?"



She was touched by his humility and kissed him.

"Oh, let's go down, Brother, I'm so tired; I'm glad there aren't six, I'm too tired to think of that many."

"And it kind of rests you only to think of five, doesn't it, Sister?"

"Yes, that's it."

And with their arms around each other the little people went slowly toward the house through the warm dusk.

They awoke fresh and bright. All the weariness of the previous day had been taken off to fairyland while they slept by "Toosle," a certain fairy friend of theirs, who was supposed to watch over their sleep, to see if he could do anything for them. Sometimes the rogue played tricks on them, such as tangling or "toosling" their hair, turning their sleeves inside out, or pulling off buttons which they were sure were all right when they had gone to bed; but oftener he did them good turns such as healing briar scratches, or black and blue spots, or bumps. These with aches and pains once in a while he carried off to fairyland and stored away until he found bad boys and girls to palm them off on.

But something awful had happened during the night. When Sister and Brother went to the cabin and looked into the barrel, only one kitten was to be found. The ram-cat too was mystified. In vain they and she looked and called, both upstairs and down. The ram-cat tried to explain to them that when she had returned from an early trip to look for her own breakfast, and jumped into the barrel to give the kittens theirs, only one of all her lovely family was left.

Wild guesses rushed one upon the other. What could have become of the four little beauties? Could Randolph and Beverly each have stolen two and taken them home to their little brothers and sisters? Could Bingo have eaten

them? Could jealous Pooley have carried them off?

In despair they went to their grandfather with their sad tale and their suspicions. He sympathized with them in their grief, and told them that it was not the first time he had known whole families of kittens to disappear and never be heard of again. But he did his best to clear away the cloud of suspicion which rested upon Bingo. In all his long years he had never known a dog to really eat cats.

“And,” he said, stooping down to pat Bingo, “see how innocent the poor dog looks, and how sad because you are so cross to him. Bingo, have you eaten any kittens this morning? Open your mouth and let me see if there is any fur in it.”

Bingo not only opened his mouth, but showed a clean red tongue and gleaming white teeth in a joyous smile.

“There, you see what an honest fellow he looks. Pat him and be friendly with him again, for I’m quite certain he knows nothing of this sad business. And anyhow, don’t you think it is rather a good thing that the poor ram-cat hasn’t five kittens to look after?”

“But we would have taken care of them, grandfather; we meant to train them,” they broke in.

“But think how many birds she would have been tempted to catch for them. Now you can manage with one and make a pet of it. And I don’t believe Bingo will meddle with it after the way Pooley cuffed him. So, cheer up.”

“We are cheering up, grandfather, as fast as we can,” replied Sister in a very doleful tone. “But it is very hard to get cheerful on only one kitten.”

“You may own the head, Sister, and I’ll own the tail,” said Brother gloomily, “and we’ll both own the paws.”

“That will be a very fair division. Come, let us have a look at the little thing.”

It was indeed an honor to have grandfather go to look at their little kitten, and they told him on the way how they had meant to have a circus; how they had found the ram-cat’s nest; and how at first Brother was just a little bit afraid that it was a panther, and so on, until they had talked themselves upstairs. Grandfather made them happy by declaring it to be the most beautiful kitten he had ever seen. He admired its snowy whiteness and its blue eyes which, he said, were very unusual.

“I am going down to the bottom-lands to see how the boys are coming on

with their hoeing, so you had better put the kitten back with its mother and come with me.”

“Oh, thank you, grandfather, for taking us, and we can play at the brook while you look after the boys.”

Away they went, their loss forgotten in thoughts of catching crawfish in the little brook which ran around the wood lot to finally tumble into the carp-pond. Catching crawfish was one of their greatest pleasures, and as they trotted along by their grandfather’s side, Brother told how Sister lifted up the stones and he picked up the crawfish she uncovered.

“And I’m very careful not to take them by the end what bites, you know, grandfather, for they just put their little arms around your finger and—whew!”

“And what do you do with them after you catch them?”

“Oh, we have a dam that we put them into, and next summer when we come to visit you, they will have grown to be big lobsters.”

By this time they had reached the brook—a pretty spot under overhanging branches, among whose leaves the birds and summer breeze made pleasant music. And here grandfather left them to pursue lobster-raising while he went forward to oversee a harvest almost as doubtful. He could still hear them splashing about in the water and talking steadily to each other.

Presently there was a pause followed by loud calls.

“Oh, grandfather, grandfather! Come, please, as fast as you can. We’ve found them! They were in the dam!”

He hastened back and saw Sister and Brother standing knee-deep in water, and in each raised hand a little drowned kitten.

“They’re dead—perfectly dead,” and Sister’s ready tears splashed into the brook.

“St-stone dead, grandfather,” and Brother swallowed hard to keep back his.

“Where in the world did you find them?”

“Right here. I was looking for our lobsters, and I felt something soft under my foot, and I picked it up and it was one of our kittens, and I felt around for more, and then I found them all.”

“It is a shame!” said grandfather, and he turned and walked quickly back to where the boys were at work, and they heard him speaking sharply to them.

“Grandfather seems to be scolding the boys; I wonder what they have

done?” said Brother.

“He is saying something about places where we don’t play.”

“Sister, I’ve just thought how it all happened! The ram-cat often comes down here to catch birds—of course she doesn’t know it’s wicked to—and maybe this morning she came and they followed her, and they fell in. That’s just the way it happened!”

“Of course it is. I’m glad we found them, if it did make us feel so awful.”

“And now we know that grandfather is the wisest man in the world! You know he said Bingo did not eat them.”

“And we were so cross to Bingo.”

“And we can have a funeral.”

“We can have four, Brother, four sweet little funerals!”

“And it will be almost better than having a circus.”

Calamities did not cease in the ram-cat’s family, for about two weeks later the poor ram-cat herself fell a victim to a savage dog, and was found dead near the barn.

“Now you will have to take entire care of poor little Snowball,” for so they had named her. “You see now that it was a good thing that the others were drowned. I’m afraid they would have been unhappy.”

“Yes, indeed, grandfather, it is a very good thing,” said Brother soberly.

All day Snowball was plied with milk and even cream, and much of the afternoon was spent in making a suitable bed for her. Aunt Sie gave them some bits of soft blanket, which they put into an old pail making quite a cozy nest. After it was finished they put it in a corner of the cabin and carried their pet to the house to have a long romp with her after supper.

They played until dark, when mamma said it was high time for both them and their kitten to be in bed, so they ran a down through the moonlight to the cabin to put Snowball into her new nest. It was quite dark in the little room, but they felt about until Sister laid hold of the bucket. “Good-night, you beautiful darling, I hope you will sleep well. Kiss her, Brother, right between her little ears, and then we’ll put the dear wee thing to bed. There now, in you go. You’ll be nice and com——”

Splash! Sputter!! Spatter!!!

“Me-yow—me-yow!”

“Oh, Brother, what is it? What has happened? She’s fallen into something! Hear her puff—she’s drowning. Beverly—Randolph—oh, somebody bring a light!”

The boys upstairs ran down with a light and the scene upon which they came threw them into screams of laughter and poor Sister into hysterical weeping.

During the day some papering had been going on at the house, and the workmen had put their bucket of paste into the cabin to have it ready when they should begin work in the morning. They had set it beside the fine couch prepared for Snowball, and in the dark Sister had laid her into it.

As the first glimmer of light showed the awful mistake, Brother seized the dripping kitten and held it high. Its ears were pasted flat to its head, its eyes were closed, and from its feebly moving paws trickled thick streams of paste.

“Oh, don’t hold it up like that! Look at its beautiful tail; it is just like a pipe-stem!” shrieked Sister. “Oh, put it on the floor, it is dying—it is dying!”

Brother sadly placed it upon the floor and it crept off leaving a trail of paste behind it.

“Is it dead yet? I can’t look!” wept Sister from under her apron which she had thrown over her face.

“Not quite, Sister; it’s creeping around a little yet. Boys, you oughtn’t to laugh,” in a voice which suited the solemn occasion.

“Deed we’s got to larf. It do look so mighty funny! Yo’ bettah take it out an’ drop it in de trof now,” and they kept on with their merriment, until the coming of the family, drawn by the uproar. Brother held the pitiable object up to be looked at. After a hurried discussion it was decided to take it to the kitchen and wash it in warm water, so a procession was formed headed by Brother bearing his slippery burden. Poor Snowball was too bewildered to object very much to the tepid bath, though she did not submit quite without protest.

After the paste was washed off she was wrapped up and put into a snug place to dry. Then the weary children were carried off to bed to dream of the awful event.

In the morning when they stole down to the kitchen they found Snowball, fluffy, frolicsome, and white, and in as high spirits as if her nine chances of life were not cut down to eight.



HOLLYHOCK LADIES

## HOLLYHOCK LADIES



H, dear, I'm sure I don't know what to do! Nothing seems to be nice this morning. Brother is not like he used to be, and Bingo has gone off to the field with the boys, and Juno shook her head at me as if she'd just be glad to hook me if I climbed through the bars, and Snowball scratched me—ah!" and the doleful list finished with a catch in the voice which was next door to a sob.

"Poor Sister, I'm sorry things are going so badly with you. How, in what way, has Brother changed?" asked mamma, as she finished cutting a button-hole.

"I—I think he likes Joey Vale better than he does me. He said—well, I don't mean he said it—but he looked as if he wished I'd go into the house last week when Joey came to play with us. And—well—mamma, I think I could have sat in between grandfather and Aunt Leashie without crowding them much, I'd have sat so slim," and at that Sister threw herself upon her mother's shoulder and gave way to the grief which had been growing more bitter every moment since she had watched her grandfather and aunt drive away.

"Oh, is that what has spoiled the day for you? Well, after you have cried you will feel better, and you will begin to recall all the lovely drives you have had, and feel sure that if dear, kind grandfather could have taken you with him he would——"

"Aunt Leashie offered to let me sit on her lap——"

"Yes, I know she did; but think how tired poor Aunt Leashie would have been at the end of several miles with a big girl on her lap. She offered, because she is unselfish; but all the same, we must be unselfish too. Now I want you to forget that you have been left behind, and dry your eyes—like little Sally Waters—only not on your frock; that would be pretty awful, wouldn't it?—and hunt Brother up and have a good play." Then mamma kissed the sorrowful little girl as she laid aside her work and took her upon her lap.

"No, I can't play with Brother, even when I'm through crying. He is tying bees into the hollyhocks, and they buzz so that they terrify me," sobbed the little girl as she cuddled up to her mother, already beginning to feel the relief of tears and the effect of a bracing sympathy.

"Tying bees into the hollyhocks! What in the world is he doing that for?"

"He says they injure the hollyhocks, and he wants to



teach them a lesson. He thinks if he scares them, they won't meddle with flowers any more. He means to keep the bees tied in until dark, and—I—I think it is very cruel. The poor things will never be able to find their way back to the hives. Brother says they can because, he says, he believes they have cat-eyes and can see in the dark. And besides, I'm afraid they will smother. Oh, dear, I feel so sorry for them—I wish he wouldn't; the poor, poor bees!" and Sister went off into another flood of tears, which mamma saw was going to be the clearing-up shower. She waited until it was over and a sunny smile showed itself in the dimple at the corner of her mouth.

"He was standing in the high chair, and—and it upset with him," here the smile was joined by a musical little laugh. "He looked so funny, pitching headforemost among the hollyhocks, with his legs sticking up in the air, just like a big Y," and Sister laughed until her eyes brimmed over with another kind of tears. "Poor little chap, he was so scared. At first I was glad he fell, and I told him so; but I did feel sorry in a minute, for I think he skinned his elbow, but he wouldn't own it."

"Oh, I'm sorry you said you were glad!"

"So am I, mamma. I think I was very cross to Brother. I even almost hoped a bee would sting him, he acted so stuck up. And he didn't seem to mind not going with grandfather at all. Oh, I'm so sorry I said it! Brother is such a dear, good little boy, and I am so bad. I wish I didn't mind things any more than Brother does."

"Well, dear, since you have learned your lesson, I don't regret your unhappy morning. You have been angry and jealous and cross, and you are now ashamed of yourself. Instead of blaming Brother, you have come to see what is good in him and bad in yourself. He has a very happy disposition. I don't think he does mind things as much as you do, so it is easy for him to be amiable and happy. But when you conquer your unkind feelings, you have fought a good fight and deserve a great deal of credit. I am very proud of my little girl when she rules herself."

"Are you, mamma? I'm so glad. I'll try always to be good to him. I think I'll ask him to let me see his poor elbow," and Sister got upon her feet.

"And I'll go with you, for I think Brother will have to find some other way

to train the bees. I am afraid they will sting him.”

“I don’t know what we can play if Brother stops doing that.”

“Perhaps I can find some other play,” answered her mother as they walked toward the sunny garden where they could see Brother looking very tall upon his lofty perch among the old-fashioned hollyhocks.

“What have the bees been doing?” called mamma as they came near.



“They are very bad, mamma. They buzz in and out of the hollyhocks and kick the yellow stuff about so, and—and—well they look so bold and fierce that I’m pretending to put them in jail. I’ve got two tied in, and if Sister had only helped me, we could ‘a had a lot of prisoners by this time,” answered the little man, looking rather tired and hot.

“But I don’t believe the poor chaps are doing anything very bad. Of course they look bold and make a lot of noise, but that is just their way, and I don’t really think they should be put into jail for that,” mamma replied.



“Don’t you?” he said, rather crestfallen.



“No, I don’t. I have known boys and girls to look bold and make a lot of noise, but I should never think of trotting them off to jail. Come down and let me see your elbow; Sister tells me you have hurt it.”



Down came Brother from his high chair and slid his sleeve up past his little tanned wrist to his dimpled white elbow, where sure enough the skin was

curled up into small shavings.

“Poor Brother!” sighed Sister softly as she pressed her lips to the hurt.

“Dear Sister!” and the arms went quickly around her neck, and peace was restored.

Mamma looked at the arm and said the injury was not a serious one. “And now I would let the prisoners out on promise that they will never again disturb the hollyhocks. Here are my scissors, I’ll bend down the stalks while you cut the strings.”

“I’ll ask them first. Bee, will you promise never to steal yellow stuff again if I let you out?”

“Tell him it’s the hollyhocks’ money,” said Sister.

“Do you know, Mister Bee, that you have been stealing hollyhock money?” in a very gruff and terrible voice.

“I heard him promise; I heard him buzz,” and Sister hopped gayly up and down. “Out he comes! Oh ho, Mister Bee!”

“Come out, Mister Bee, and tell all your friends.”

Snip went the scissors, up bounded the stalk, and out flew the bee fuming and scolding.

The other culprit was set free with like ceremonies.

“What shall we do now?” after watching the bees out of sight.

“Well, if I were a little girl and boy, I——”

“Oh mamma! How could you be both? Who ever heard of even a mamma being a little girl and boy?” and they seized her hands and danced around in high glee that they had caught her in a trap.

“But I did not say I could be a little girl and boy. I only said if I were. But then maybe you don’t care to know what I would do if Toosle should happen along and touch me on the tip of my nose with his wand, and turn me into a little girl and boy,” and mamma looked as if under such charming conditions she knew of thousands of things she could do, and of millions of plays she could play.

“Oh yes we do, yes we do. Tell us, tell us. You don’t know how hard it is for little girls and boys to know what to play sometimes.”

“Don’t I though? Maybe I have never been a little girl.”

"Oh, I wish I had been a little girl when you were one. I'm sure you had such fun!" cried Sister.

"Well, if I were one this morning I think I'd play—let me see what I'd play," said mamma musingly, as if sorting over a multitude of joys in her mind. "Yes, I think as to-day is rather warm outside, I would go into the summer house and play hollyhock ladies."

"Oh mamma, you never told us about that play before. What in the world is it?"

"I'll show you. We'll pick a hollyhock of each shade—here, toss them into my apron—then we'll get some single poppies, and some of those little green bells that grow down by the currants; and some ribbon grass; and some thorns off the honey locusts—and then we'll go to the summer house."

"Oh, how lovely! Pick away, Brother; I know it's going to be a perfectly lovely play. I'm so glad I decided not to go with Aunt Leashie and grandfather!" and Sister buzzed about among the flowers like a busy bee herself.

"Hadn't we better get two of each shade?" called Brother.

"Perhaps it would be well," agreed mamma.

In a few minutes her sewing apron looked quite baggy with its floral treasures, and they turned to the vine-clad summer house. In the center stood a round table upon which they piled their flowers, and then they drew the chairs up around it.



"Now, Brother, let me have all the string you have in your pockets."

"Hurry, Brother, I'm so anxious to see what mamma is going to do."

The string was dragged out in tangled little wads, and mamma, seating herself, picked out her first blossom, turned it carefully inside out and tied it about half an inch below the crown with a bit of string, which she afterward

skillfully covered with a ribbon grass sash, and stood it down upon the table—a very fair lady in a brilliant red silk gown topped by a neat little round head.

“Now she must have a parasol to protect her complexion. Give me that little red poppy, Sister.”

All the green was picked off the poppy and a thorn stuck into the center and fixed firmly in the lady’s belt, and she was ready to walk forth into the world.

“What a beauty!” Brother said; “and I believe we can make men too.”

“All right; make whatever you can.”

Away he slipped and soon came back with his straw hat full of flowers. “These are for their legs,” he explained, laying down a handful of the neatly rolled up buds of morning glories.



“Just the thing,” said mamma; “your men will look like gay cavaliers. If you look into the hollyhocks you’ll find that some have plumes on their heads, and they will do for the knights.”

She laid down her work and watched Brother. His gentleman turned out very like her lady, except that two thorns upon which were strung morning glory buds were stuck into the gathered folds of the skirt which he proceeded to snip away into a doublet. The blunt ends of the thorns made very decent feet upon which the gallant knight did not stand much more unsteadily than the knights of old often stood upon their feet. When it was done he looked up brightly at his mother for approval.



“Isn’t our dear little boy clever, mamma?” said Sister. “That is just a darling of a man. Make a lot of them, Brother.”

Thus praised he worked with a will, and Sister began to make children out of the little green bells, which stood up primly upon the edge of their skirts.

The three worked away busily and soon had a fine array of brilliant ladies, gentlemen, and children. And then the gayety began. They were formed into a procession, marched to an imaginary ball-room, and stood up for dancing.

“I think they ought to have a supper after their half,” said mamma; “and if you will come to the house with me, Brother, I will give you refreshments for our friends from flower land, and enough for you and Sister too, so you can eat with them. Sister, you can arrange the supper hall while we are away.”

As they went out of sight in the direction of the house, Sister fell to work making ready for the feast. Sofas of great soft pink roses were brought in for the hollyhock ladies to tilt themselves against, while the knights were stood about a monstrous sunflower which was to serve as a table, and the prim little green children were grouped in a corner. When all was finished she threw herself down upon a bench where she could keep her eyes upon the company, and waited for Brother.

And now happened a strange and wonderful thing. She was just thinking what a lovely thing it must have been to live in the time of fairies—to talk to them—to——

Suddenly she felt a soft patter across her bare foot, like raindrops falling gently upon it, and looking down, she could not believe her eyes when she saw, as plain as bright daylight could make it, the dearest, the sweetest little carriage! It was made of a softly tinted pearl shell, and drawing it were six snow-white horses, perfectly shaped but no larger than mice. It was their little black hoofs she had felt on her foot.

She was about to fall upon her knees beside the dainty carriage, but she looked again—to make sure that she really was looking—when there, right before her very eyes, stepping down from the carriage, was a darling fairy queen about as tall as her little finger.

“Oh, you sweet, sweet creature! I know you; you are a fairy, though I never saw one before in all my life. Do, do let me hold you in my hand. I’ll be very careful of you, I’ll not squeeze you. Oh, if only Brother could see you!”

“Brother will see me. I have come to the ball you are giving for my young ladies and knights.”

And there, sure enough, came troops of fairies, from where Sister could not tell, until one of the young lady fairies caught her high-heeled slipper and pitched down on her nose, and then Sister saw that the flower ladies and gentlemen were turning into fairies as fast as they could, and floating down from the table to join their queen.

"I would be sorry to go back to fairyland without having a chat with Brother," continued the queen, gracefully gathering the folds of her skirt together and stepping into Sister's outstretched hand; "for I want to thank him for his efforts to protect my people from the attacks of fierce bees, as they call themselves, though they are really goblins who were created to drive poor little girls and boys to their lessons by being held up as examples of industry. They are greedy creatures, who suck all the sweetness out of my flowers, and get nothing but praise from short-sighted mortals for their industrious habits. He is the first one who has ever rightly understood them, as I saw by the course he took this morning. And I was glad to see that you were at last willing to help him."

Sister could not speak. She just sat and looked at the dainty, the exquisite creature standing on her palm. She was afraid to move a finger lest she should crush her, and she wondered how she could so clearly hear every word spoken by such a mite. The queen went on:

"My brother Toosle——"

"Oh, are you Toosle's sister? We know him very well."

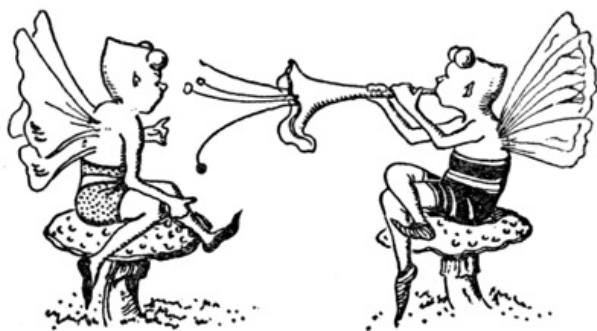
"Little girl," with rather a stern manner, "fairy queens are not accustomed to being interrupted."

"Oh, please excuse me; I was so surprised to find that you were Toosle's——I mean Mister Toosle's sister."

"If you were surprised that makes a difference and I'll excuse you. But as I was about to say, Toosle and I have often talked of coming to see you and Brother, to ask you how you would like to be assistant fairy king and queen." Sister gave a little squeal of delight at this, but seeing a gleam of severity come into the corner of the queen's eye, she did not speak. "People have an idea that fairies are dying out, but it is a great mistake. They are increasing rapidly. And what with choosing fairy godmothers and godfathers, and sending fairies to keep girls and boys out of mischief, and to watch the goblins, really we are often so tired when night comes, that no matter how fine the moonlight, I am so stiff and worn out, and my head is in such a whirl, that I have no heart to dance. So you see we need help. Then too we have often thought that your friend Juno would make a good horned monster, to fight the——"

"Why mamma, I do believe Sister is fast asleep," said Brother tiptoeing into the summer house and leaning over her. "Her eyes are shut and she breathes just as she does at night."

"Poor little thing, she is tired out. Let her sleep," answered mamma softly.



ARE THERE FAIRIES?

## ARE THERE FAIRIES?



“SISTER, I just want to ask you, do you believe there are fairies on grandfather’s farm?”

“Yes, Brother, I do.”

“Why?”

“Well now, Brother! Do I have to tell you why? Didn’t

I see the queen of the fairies in the summer house, with my own eyes? And haven’t we always known about Toosle? And didn’t Aunt Leashie show us the fairy path the very first time we ever went through the woods to Mrs. Brown’s? And haven’t we this very minute found this big leaf which must be a fairy’s bath-tub? Ain’t I touching it with my first finger this very second——” Sister stopped to take breath, which gave Brother a chance to say somewhat doubtfully:

“I know Sister—but——”

“Brother, I think it is very wicked of you to say ‘but.’ I should think you would almost be afraid to go to sleep at night, after asking me if I believe there are fairies anywhere. I think it’s dangerous.”

Brother looked down, ashamed to meet Sister’s eyes.

“Only—sometimes, you see—I—I just kind of—of—wonder——”



“If you are going to stand right here in the edge of this lonesome woods where there may be bears, almost out of sight of the house, and say that you don’t believe in fairies any more, I shall go home,” and Sister turned as if to put her threat into execution, then looked over her shoulder to add, “I’m not going to stay here and be turned into a hollow stump maybe, or an old witch, and see you go hopping off, a big toad or an ole har, and neither of us ever, ever, ev-er be able to speak to each other again. It makes me nearly cry just to think of it.” Coming back, “Oh, Brother, don’t say you don’t believe in fairies any more. Is it Joey Vale who has been talking to you?”

“Oh no, Joey Vale has never said a word against them.”

“Then it is that bad Tom Nellis—and he stones birds, you know he does.”

“Yes, it was. He said——”

“Don’t tell me what he said.”

“Oh, of course I don’t believe him. I just wanted to see if you still felt certain about seeing the fairy queen that day in the summer house. Because if you do, then I’m sure; for I guess you know better than he does whether you were asleep.”

“Does that awful boy pretend that I was asleep?”

“Yes,” with a solemn nod.

“Then, Brother, I don’t think we ought ever to go over to the Nellises again to play; they never let us hold their baby, anyhow. I think mamma ought to forbid us to speak to them, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do. Just think, Sister, he said you were a goose——”

“Oh, my!”

“And that we were both greenies.”

“Oh—h—h!”

“And that he had lived here all his life, and had never seen a fairy.”

“As if fairies were likely to appear to such a boy! Beverly has seen ole hars which he says weren’t there when he went to hit them; and he steals the eggs you know. It doesn’t take such very good people to see ole hars, but people have to be very good before they can see fairies.”

“Oh, yes, they have to be good, awful good; but we have come pretty near seeing Toosle a few times. And now I feel sure that this is a fairy bath-tub. Let’s go off a little way and see if any of them come to bathe in it. Let’s climb that bent tree and watch them from it.”

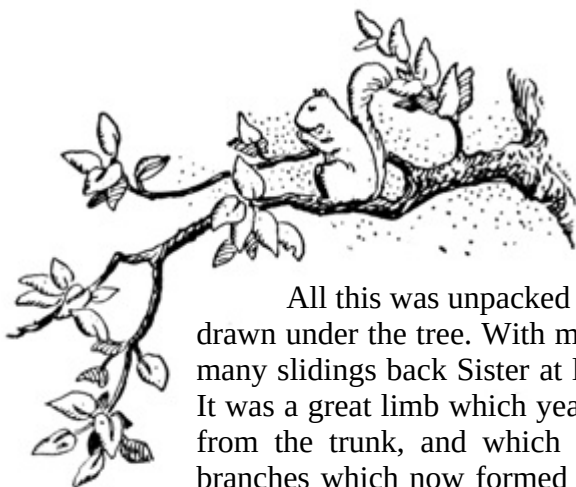
“The very thing! You are such a darling little boy. I expect you’ll have to boost me; I’m not very good at climbing.”

“Well, girls are most always not, but you climb better than other girls—better than Tom Nellis could if he was a girl, I guess. Sister, look! It’s a perfect Swiss Family Robinson tree! We’ll go up and live in it. We’ve even got Bingo along, and he can be Turk and Bill.”

“Oh, how lovely! You do think of such nice plays, Brother. I’ll go up first and you can hand the things up to me, and I can hang them where jackals and things won’t get them. We’ve never had half as nice a play before.”

Brother and Sister, with their ever-faithful Bingo, had started out for a picnic, with no orders, only that they should keep within sight of the house. They had a bountiful lunch, and carried their usual baggage which was, a trowel for digging wells and ponds, a small rug to sit upon while they ate, and

a popgun as a means of defense against wild animals. These, with a large supply of string and rope, and a hammer, which Brother always insisted upon taking “in case of accidents,” and an old milk strainer in which to catch crawfish, should they feel like taking up the raising of lobsters, completed their outing luggage.



All this was unpacked from the express which had been drawn under the tree. With much scrambling and laughter and many slidings back Sister at last gained the perch she wished. It was a great limb which years before had been partly broken from the trunk, and which had thrown forth many upright branches which now formed a leafy corridor along which the two little ones could patter in their bare feet, as happy and as free as the squirrels which leaped from bough to bough above them.



“Is it nice?” called up Brother, his cheeks glowing and his eyes shining.

“It is per-fectly lovely, only I seem very high. Do you suppose I can ever get down again?”

“Oh, yes; let down the string”—Sister, through Brother’s forethought had carried up a bit of twine with a pebble tied to the end—“and I’ll begin to send up the things. Night is coming on, and the jackals may be here any instant,” he said in as firm and manly a voice as he could muster up.

“Oh, you kind of scare me when you talk so fiercely. I feel just exactly as if we had been shipwrecked, and hadn’t but one minute before night to get all fixed up, and before the wolves would begin to howl. So, hurry up, Brother. If only we could for once all be shipwrecked! Shall I tie it to a limb? Oh, dear, dear, I’ve dropped the string!”

“There now! I knew you’d do that!” said Brother in a cross tone. He did

not often get out of patience, but it certainly was very trying after boosting and hoisting even a thin girl up a slippery tree, to have her drop the string before a single piece of wreckage had been raised to a place of safety.

“Well, please don’t be cross to me. I was so frightened just thinking that maybe you’d be eaten by wild animals——”

“Sister! Haven’t I the gun?”

“Oh, yes, I’m so glad; but I forgot about the gun. You climb up, dear, and bring me the string; I won’t drop it again. You might play you were a monkey while you’re climbing, and carry the string in your teeth and jabber. Oh, how beautifully you do it!” For Brother had at once forgotten his grievance in the delight of imagining himself a monkey, and he squeaked merrily as he twitched himself up the tree. “Isn’t it a perfect bower? Will we be able to get Bingo up, do you suppose?”

“Of course we can; he’s just longing to climb up now. Look at him.” And in truth Bingo was doing his best by pawing up the tree and barking shrilly at his friends.

Brother made the twine fast to a twig and then deftly swung himself down by the low drooping branches, which at the far end of the limb almost touched the ground.

One after another the things were raised and bestowed in places of safety, and then it came Bingo’s turn. But try as they might, they were unable to get him up. Brother tied the rope around his “waist” and lifted from below while Sister pulled from above. But Bingo’s terror was so alarming and his yelps so piteous that, thinking they must be killing him, they quickly freed him, whereupon he took to his heels and tore off toward the house with his tail tucked tightly between his legs.

“What shall we do?” cried Sister as she clasped her hands and watched his flight. “Turk and Bill have both gone! We have nothing left but your trusty gun. Come up quickly, Mr. Swiss Family, and pull up the ladder after you; I hear the howl of wolves in the distance!”

Brother scrambled up in mad haste, jerking the rope up after him, and all was made secure.

“Now we will break our fast,” she said, speaking in the fascinating language of the Robinson family whom they had long loved and envied. “The milk from these fresh cocoanuts will do for us to drink until we can plant some tea and coffee, or catch a cow.” And so on, as Sister carefully spread out their lunch on the broad limb.

As they ate, they listened to the imaginary roars of wild beasts, or talked of whether their ship would go to pieces before they could get off all the valuables. And they planned how, next day, they would drive Juno into the wood and tether her under the tree, and coax Bingo back, and bring Snowball and the two pigeons. With all these—and possibly Sol Brown and Joey Vale—they could be as nearly perfectly happy as children who had not actually been shipwrecked could expect to be.

During the afternoon Brother went down many times from the house tree, and made trips into the “jungles” around them and along the coasts, always bringing back reports of the wonderful things he had seen, and from these trips he sometimes returned fleeing as for his life, upon which he would be helped to a place of safety by Sister, and after which—so totally to them did the real give way to the unreal—they did not fail to “return thanks,” after the frequent custom of the pious Swiss family which they personated. Sister would gladly have joined in these excursions, but she could not get quickly back into the tree in case of attack, so she had to remain on high and receive the spoils as they were sent up to her by means of the rope.

It was a long, long happy day, and they could scarcely believe their ears when they heard the afternoon express go shrieking up the valley.

“Start home the moment you hear the express train,” was the one order which ruled their wandering summer days, and which they never dreamed of disregarding. So now they made no question, but began to put their things together and lower them to their wagon. Everything was down at last, even Sister, who, with moans and timid cries, had slid down the trunk, and they were about to turn their faces homeward, when she cried out:

“Oh, my hat! I have left my hat in the tree. Can you get it for me, Brother?”

“Course I can get it! But, Sister, you oughtened to leave your hats in trees. Now we’ll be late, and mamma will think we’re lost again.”

Up the tree he went, rather slowly this time, for his many climbs had wearied him, and made his way along the limb to where the hat was hanging.

“Catch it!” he called, as he tossed it down.

But alas, poor Brother! He leaned a little too far to fling it clear of the branches, and losing his balance, came crashing through and fell at Sister’s feet. He did not move.

“Oh, Brother!” she screamed, as she threw herself beside him.

He lay with closed eyes and did not answer her for what seemed to her a very, very long time. Then his eyelids trembled and slowly lifted, and he looked at her in a dazed way, trying to smile.

“Oh, darling, darling, where are you hurt? Do speak to me!”

He put his grimy little hand into hers and answered slowly:

“Don’t—cry. I—I just ache—all over.”

“Oh, Brother, do you think your back is broken, like the man’s who fell off the wharf? Can you sit up? Let me put you into the express and pull you home. Oh, dear, dear! It is all my fault. I made you go back for my hat.”

“That’s no matter. Maybe I can walk; I’ll try.”

But when with Sister’s help he tried to get up, he sank back with a cry of pain, into a little heap upon the ground.

“You must go home without me. I can’t get into the wagon.”

“Oh, I’ll never, never go home again. I won’t leave you!” and she gave way to another flood of tears.

“But mamma will be anxious.”

“Mamma would never want me to leave you. Oh, I wish I had fallen out of the tree! I will put the rug under you. Do you think it is your leg?”

“No, I don’t think so—it’s—all over me.”

But pulling the poor little man upon the rug made him moan and beg her to leave him where he had fallen. And then Sister’s heart seemed to break. His lips were white and the beads of moisture stood on his forehead and dampened his yellow hair. A line from a song which her mother often sang came into her mind:

The death damp was on his pure white brow.

She was sure he was dying. They had been happy and loving little people, and yet—ah, she could not help remembering—there had been times when she had “got mad” at Brother. Once she had even pinched him; several times she had pushed him and slapped him; once she had even hoped a bee would sting him. Oh, those terrible memories! She sobbed so bitterly that the little boy turned stiffly and put a loving arm around her, as she lay beside him with her face to the ground.

“Dear Sister, don’t cry.”

"I can't help it, Brother; I've often been so bad to you, I—I—I've slapped you a good many times. I was cross to you this morning about the fairies. And now you are going to die, because I made you fall out of the tree. And if you die I want to die too!"

"But maybe I won't die; perhaps I'll just have to have my arms and legs cut off," suggested Brother with a view to cheering his sister.

"No, dear; I think you are going to die. You are as white as snow," she answered with the frankness of childhood. "Oh, if only I could scream loud enough to make them hear at the house! Shall I run to the edge of the woods and try?"

"Yes."

She kissed him tenderly and then sped away. She ran out clear of the trees and called. She stood upon her tiptoes and shouted out first one name and then another, at the top of her voice. But no one answered. She saw grandfather come home from the post office and go into the house; she saw Sally come out of the kitchen and get an armful of wood and then go back. They both looked very, very far away. It was no use to try. They would not hear her.

"I can't make any one hear; I'll not leave you again all alone."

"Except for the fairies, Sister."

"The fairies might help us if they only knew about you. But why do you keep your eyes shut, dear?"

"I don't know, only it rests me. I feel—kind of tired—I guess I want—to go to sleep—I think it is night—I——" He became silent.

"Oh, he is dying, I know he is," wept the wretched little girl, as she gently lifted his head into her lap and watched his quiet face.

Suddenly the blue eyes opened, and he exclaimed sharply,

"Sister! did you see him?"

"Who? Where? Grandfather?"

"No, not grandfather—Toosle."

"Where, Brother, oh, where?"

"Right here. He's gone now; but he said, 'Why don't you wave a flag? Shipwrecked people always wave flags and shoot off cannons.'"

"But we haven't any flags or cannons. It is quite light out of the woods, and I know I could make them see a flag if only I had one."

They were both silent a moment, then Brother said, with some of his usual energy:

“Take off your white apron and tie it to the gun, and go out and wave it and wave it!”

“Oh, Brother, you always know just what to do! I’ll come back just the minute I can.”

“What dat w’ite t’ing a-bobbin’ up an’ down ober dere by de woods?” asked Randolph of Beverly as the two boys came up from the cornfields.

“I dun know. Looks like some trick ob de chillun, tryin’ to make us b’lieve it’s a ghos’.”

“Well, it’s a-wavin’ at us, whatever ’tis. It sutt’nly is a-wavin’.”

“Deir ma dun know if dey be in de woods so late.”

“Ho, dey nebber know when it gits late. I reckon we better go ‘roun’ dat way an’ bring ’em home.”

“Oh, boys, come, come quick! Hurry, hurry! Brother fell out of a tree, and I can’t get him home.”

The boys quickened their pace to a run, and were soon hastening with Sister to where poor Brother lay.

It was easy work for Randolph to lift him in his strong arms and carry him steadily homeward. Sister became very gay in the sudden deliverance which had come, and she walked ahead with the “flag” over her shoulder, trying to make Brother laugh by showing him how she had waved it to the boys; and Beverly, who came behind with the baggage, told him they “come powerful near runnin’,” thinking it was a ghost.

The company was seen by the family, and mamma and the aunts came hurrying to meet it, while Bingo penitently came behind. And so Brother was taken home and laid upon a heap of cushions on the sofa. Loving hands ministered to him, and grandfather, who in his early years had studied to be a doctor, made a careful examination, and soon told them that no bones were broken, but that the muscles of the back were strained by the fall and that he was badly bruised.

A warm bath and a gentle rubbing soon relieved him of much of the pain, and the poor little man was able, from his couch, to join with Sister in the

lively story of their day's doing. Her spirits had risen almost beyond control when she found that Brother was still to be spared to them, and she gave a funny account of the rise and downfall of the "Swiss Family Robinson," adding extra touches as she noticed Brother's enjoyment.

"Well, I am certain of one thing," said grandfather. "If ever Brother is shipwrecked he'll know just what to do. It isn't every boy with the breath knocked out of him, and his back all strained, who would think to have his sister tie her apron on his popgun and wave it for a flag of distress."

"Oh, but I didn't think of it, grandfather. It was Toosle who told me to do it," said Brother, getting up on his elbow. "You see I seemed to go to sleep, and there he was, just squealing at me to wave a flag. He was such a funny looking little fellow!"

"And now, Brother, you have seen Toosle, and I have seen the fairy queen, and so now we know that there are fairies on grandfather's farm, eh, Brother?"



THE PARTY

## THE PARTY



o, thank you, I won't get out. I must be at home before dark. I only drove around to ask if you would send the children over to Fair View to-morrow. My nieces from Baltimore are with us, and the Beldon children are coming; so are several families nearer us, and we'll have quite a party. Send them in the morning and let them stay until evening."

"Oh, thank you. The children will be more than glad to go. It will be a delightful day for them. Won't it, children?"

They could only clutch each other's hands and gasp out: "I should think so! Thank you for asking us, Miss Kate."

Then Miss Kate leaned out and shook hands with mamma, left her love for grandfather and the aunties, kissed her hand to the children and drove away.

"We're go-ing over to Fair View, we're go-ing over to Fair View!" chanted Sister in rhythmical measure as she skipped off across the lawn toward the sunset, her long fair hair streaming out over her shoulders as she went.

"We're go-ing over to Fair View, we're go-ing over to Fair View!" chanted Brother, a yard or two behind her.

"We'll cross the yawning valley!" came from Sister.

"And we'll cross the yawning valley!" echoed Brother.

The children held a belief that they always felt, like yawning while crossing a certain valley.

"And we'll ride on Lou-ey's po-nee," came Sister's voice from the far edge of the lawn.

"Yes, we'll ri-hide on Lou-ey's po-nee!" echoed Brother again, growing a little short of breath.

"Are you getting out of breath, Brother?" skipping lightly.

"Yes, in-deed I—h—am, Sister."

"Then with a hop we'll stop, Brother," and circling around on one foot, closely followed by Brother, she dropped upon the grass.

"The very next thing to being a fairy," she said in her everyday tone. "I'd as soon go to Miss Kate's to spend the day."

“I’d even rather than to be a fairy. Because, you know, if you’re a fairy — well—even if you *are* a fairy, boys—that is bad boys, like the Nellises—don’t believe you are, and then it’s just the same as if you wasn’t.”

“It’s a blessing that the Nellises won’t be there.”

“I should think it is.” Then rather gloomily, “Sister, do you think the strange girls will be stuck up?”

“No, I do not think they will be; but if they are, we’ll have to talk grand.”

Talking’ grand—or grand, as they pronounced it, to give it a more elegant sound—was the using of a very haughty tone by Sister and a deep and manly tone by Brother. They usually “talked grand” when they played “lady come to see,” and also when they were with children whom they stood somewhat in awe of; and the practice had been invented by Sister as a means of supporting their dignity when they felt it to be in peril.

“Why are you two little toads sitting there in the grass?” called grandfather as he came home from the post office, and stopped to look toward them, shading his eyes from the level rays of the setting sun with his hand.

“Just think, grandfather,” springing up and running to him with outstretched arms, “we are invited to a party at Miss Kate’s, and it is to last all day, from the morning until sunset. We wish you were a little boy so you could go too.”

“Maybe I can go even if I am not a little boy,” said grandfather. “You don’t think Miss Kate would send me home, do you?”

“Oh, grandfather, just think of a grown-up gentleman being sent home!”

“Well, I suppose you’ll want something to eat, even if you are going to a party to-morrow, so you had much better come in to your supper, and then we’ll arrange how to get you there and back.”

“Grandfather,” began Sister rather timidly, “would you and mamma and the aunts be willing to let us take old Charley and drive all alone to Miss Kate’s?”

Grandfather looked rather doubtful at this and made his mouth look as though he were going to whistle. “I don’t know about that.”

“I’m sure dear old Charley would not run away with us,” urged Brother.

“Oh no, he would not run away; there would be more danger of his standing still with you.”

“But I could get out and pull him.”

“And I could lean over the dashboard and push him.”

Grandfather laughed. “I’m afraid it would be too much of a responsibility for two such little people.”

“But, grandfather, that is just what we would like. All my life I’ve wanted to take Brother on a journey where I’d have all the—the re-spons’bility of him. He could get out often and look at the buckles and wheels.”

“But what if Charley should decide to stop and rest just as you were crossing the yawning valley, and you should sit and yawn at each other until you went to sleep, and Charley went to sleep, and none of you would wake until evening, and the party would be over.”

“Oh, how perfectly awful that would be!”

After talking over the proposed drive in all its lights, it was finally decided that it would be quite safe for the children to take old Charley and drive themselves as far as Mrs. Vale’s the next morning, where they would pick Joey up, and with him make the rest of the journey to Fair View, two miles farther on.

Many were the charges and warnings given to them as they started. The two little ones were kissed and hugged and as many good-byes spoken as if they were starting for a journey around the world. Indeed a journey around the world could hardly have impressed them more deeply. All things seemed to combine to begin the festive day well. The sun shone brightly, the birds sang, Brother was as well as if he had never been the head of the Swiss Family Robinson, Sister had had most radiant dreams all night, and old Charley was in his kindest humor.

“You had better go down past the barn, so Charley can drink at the branch; then he will not want to stop at any of the other drinking places. Sister will drive as far as the crooked oak, then Brother will take his turn and drive to Mrs. Vale’s. And you had better leave Bingo there until you come back, because he might want to fight dogs along the way.”

The children promised to remember and obey all directions, and the wheels began to turn slowly along the grassy carriage way, which led across the upper part of the vineyard, and down a long slope at the foot of which ran a little brook, or “branch,” as such is called in Virginia. In this Charley dearly loved to drink and meditate, with his feet firmly planted among the pebbles and the clear water running over them. Sometimes he stood so long that Brother more than once had been obliged to climb out over the back of the buggy and wade

around to his head and lead him to land. He was always forgiven for these failures, as his little friends believed that when he “went in wading he got to thinking about when he was a colt and forgot all about being a horse.”

But this morning it would be rather a serious thing if he were to forget, as Brother had on shoes and stockings and his best white sailor suit. So they used all the time between the house and brook planning what to do should he stop in the brook.

And sure enough, Charley did stop, and he seemed to forget even more completely than usual. He must have thought over each of his coltish days separately. Brother was just about to undress his feet when he was much relieved to see coming along the road an old man. The old man saw their trouble and turned into the field.

“Can’t you make your horse go?”

“No, sir; and I’ve got my shoes and stockings and my good clothes on, and so I can’t wade in to pull him out.”

“And can two such little girls drive about alone?”

They were carefully tucked under a linen carriage robe to protect them from dust, so Brother’s trousers were hidden from view, and the long, light hair hanging about his chubby face made him look as much like a girl as like a boy. Still, a boy’s heart beat within his bosom, and it was not in a boy’s nature to let such a mistake go. So he said in a polite and formal manner:

“You misunderstand me, sir; I am a boy.”

But the old gentleman must have been very deaf, for he replied smilingly:

“Well, I’m nigh on to eighty years, and I never saw two such pretty little girls before.”

Poor Brother looked sad, and was about to explain further, when Sister nudged him, and whispered to him not to mind, then piped out shrilly: “We are going to a party, sir, and we are not in our bare feet, so we can’t go into the water, and we will be very glad if you will please pull him out for us.”

“Yes, that is what I came to do.” And he hooked the bent head of his cane into Charley’s bridle and led him ashore. “You had better not let him go into any more water, and drive carefully. Good-bye, little ladies.”

“Good-bye, sir, and thank you very much.”

They began again their slow forward movement, but Brother objected: “Sister, you ought to have let me explain; now he will always think I am a

girl.”

At the foot of every little rise of ground Charley stopped to rest, and again at the top. At each of these pauses, which his loving little friends thought were necessary in order to restore his breath and strength, they bemoaned their weight and wondered if they were driving him too fast. At last a turn in the road brought them in sight of the Yale farmhouse, and they were glad to see Joey (to whom word had been sent) standing in the road and waving for them to hurry.

“Joey has on shoes and stockings,” said Brother aghast.

“Red stockings,” added Sister.

“He is awfully dressed up. I didn’t know he had shoes or stockings, did you?”

“No; and I do hope he won’t seem proud with us. I’m more afraid of him, though he always seems an awfully big boy. I’m almost sorry we came.”

“Never mind, Sister; I’ll tell him about the quail’s nest that we have most found, and that will make him think we are rather big.”

But in spite of their fears, Joey greeted them in a most cordial and gay manner.

He looked overheated and crowded into his clothes, and his hands and face had rather a puffy look from the unwonted collar and cuffs out of which they came. He hastily climbed into the buggy between them.

“It was very good of your grandfather to have you stop for me.”

This remark made the spirits of the children go up with a bound. Joey was not acting at all as if he had shoes and stockings on, or as if he thought them too small to drive all the way alone. They drove happily along the shady river road listening to all that Joey had to say with great respect, and at times even forgetting that he was not bare-footed. Joey almost forgot his hot red knitted stockings and stiff shoes himself in his glad anticipations—and anticipations must be pleasant indeed when they can make a boy who runs in his bare feet eight months out of twelve forget that he is shod.

If there were two general favorites in the neighborhood, they were Miss Kate Fair and Joey Vale, and, as is not always the case with favorites, they liked each other just as well as every one else liked them. So when Miss Kate decided to give a party the first person she thought of was Joey, for, as she said, “How could any one do anything unless Joey was on hand to start it?”

As old Charley turned into the avenue and his sorrel head was now and again visible through the trees, he was espied by the waiting group upon the wide porch, and those he brought were hailed by the gayly waved handkerchief of Miss Kate and the shouts of welcome from the children who clustered around her.

“We have just been waiting for you,” said Miss Kate as she came down the steps to help Sister and Brother out. “We were afraid you were not coming. Joey, please drive around to the stable and you will find Jim there to take the horse, and then hurry back, for we are waiting to go down to the willows.”



By the time Joey got back Brother and Sister had come to the conclusion that the Baltimore girls were not “stuck up,” and they and the Beldon children had said “Well!” to each other rather shyly, and Tommy Beldon had punched Brother in the back, so it looked as if they were going to have a very good time indeed. The willows bordered a little stream which wandered through the lowlands, and when they reached them, the sandy earth under them looked so cool, and the water sparkled so invitingly that soon a heap of loose shoes and stockings showed how strong the temptation to go in wading was, and splashing and laughter was heard up and down the stream.



“Joey, I should feel so much more comfortable if only you were in with them,” Miss Kate was kind enough to say, as she saw him eying them enviously. “Do take off your shoes and stockings and roll up your trousers and go in too.” Joey needed no urging, and he was soon heading the line.

As soon as she had seen her little guests busy, she began the laying of the dinner table under the trees, with the solid, comfortable meal which she knew they would soon be ready for.

After dinner was eaten—just as had been hoped—Louey Fair’s pony was brought and each child had a ride on its broad, hot back, and then Sister and Brother, being the greatest strangers, were allowed to ride up to the house, where they were to go, to be out of the afternoon sun. Once there a grand romp began in the wide, old-fashioned halls and in the empty rooms, for, as in many another Virginia home, there were plenty of empty rooms in the Fair mansion.

It was a wildly happy afternoon, what with playing “hide and seek” in closets, under stairways, and behind generous doors, races along the porch which encircled the whole house, and “lost my glove yesterday, found it to-day,” on the lawn. Indeed the fun grew so fast and furious that Brother lost his head and for the first time in his life did a really bad thing. When he was running around the ring to drop the glove, instead of dropping it in proper form behind Sissie Beldon, he seized her by the ankles and pulled her feet from under her, causing poor Sissie to fall flat upon her small pug nose. Of course he was very sorry as soon as he had done it and kissed Sissie’s bumped nose, and tried to wipe the tears from her eyes with his own handkerchief, in which he had early in the day wrapped (and forgot) a crawfish to take home with him to be used in the lobster dam. But Sissie saw its little claws through her tears, and shrieked piteously.



Then later, one of the Beldon boys broke the string of coral beads around the neck of one of the Baltimore girls, and another boy dragged Sister so forcibly from a hiding-place that he nearly ripped the skirt from her waist, and she bristled with pins for the rest of the day. At one moment, after all these outrages, it looked as if the party was going to be a failure, for the girls all declared that, except Joey Vale, worse boys had never been allowed to attend a party, and that they would not play with them any more. At this all the boys pretended to cry in loud voices, and wiped their tears on their hats and elbows, and altogether were so witty, that in spite of themselves, the girls had to laugh, and harmony was so fully restored that each promised not to “tell on them” when they got home.



After that Miss Kate gathered her guests about her on the grass and told them the most lovely stories, until Bobby Beldon, to his sister's sickening shame, interrupted her to declare that he was just starving. At this Miss Kate marched them into the dining room to a real Southern supper, to which, in spite of the blame heaped upon Bobby for his impoliteness, they all did fullest justice. When they came out from it, revived in body and spirit, they fell to playing "Old Bloody Tom" until the gathering shades of evening gave such reality to the play that it was too much for the timid ones, and Miss Kate had to call a halt and make them quiet down. Then she and Joey began to sing very sweetly:

Come, come, come, come to the sunset tree,  
The day is past and gone,  
The woodman's axe lies free,  
And the reaper's work is done.



And one little voice after another joined in, as the children gathered close together. They were still singing simple, childish songs as the various carriages came to bear them to their homes.

When Sister and Brother reached Mrs. Vale's they found Randolph waiting to take Joey's place, and they were very willing to leave the rest of the journey to his care.

Grandfather, mamma, and the aunties, were waiting outside the brightly lighted home to receive them. As they were tenderly lifted out of the buggy it seemed many a day since the morning, and they were quite awestruck to find that it was nine o'clock.

It was late when they woke next morning and a soft rain was falling, so that play, anywhere but in the house, was quite out of the question. Sister was very weary from the previous day's pleasure, and sat most of the morning with her beloved white kitten sleeping on her lap. Brother went away to the library, where grandfather found him "printing" in very neat letters with a pencil.

"What are you writing, Brother?" he asked.

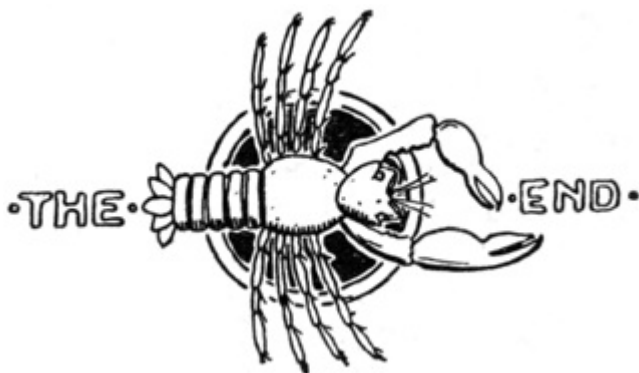
"I am writing a fable, grandfather. I will read it to you. It is about a party, and it is named, 'The Two Dogs.' "

" 'One day two dogs went to a farmer's to visit some other dogs that were

giving a tea-party. They were not invited to it. The dogs that were giving it made a row because they invited themselves. At the table, the host upset a glass of water he was so furious. Then he said, "Bad dogs, get you out. You shall never put your foot in this feasting yard again." "'

"That is a very good fable, Brother," said grandfather. "Give it to mamma and ask her to put it away for you, so that you can read it when you are a big boy. It has a very good moral."

"Yes, I think any dog that has that read to him, won't go to a tea-party unless he is invited. I'll get mamma to read it to Bingo."



## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Farm's Little People* by Annie Howells Fréchette]