

## Corner for Junior Readers

Some of Denny's Out-of-School Doings

(By Annie Margaret Pike)

### CHAPTER VIII. Bees and Borage

Denis had been busy cultivating his own particular strip of the garden.

He had grown nothing but borage.

The plants were now in blossom, and although Bridget was willing to concede that the blue flowers were a pretty colour, no one else had a word of praise.

Denny did not appear to be discouraged.

For most ordinary occasions and even in emergencies Bridget possessed an all-sufficient, if a rather miscellaneous, vocabulary. One morning it failed her utterly.

It was on the day in the Summer holiday when Denny explained why he had grown the borage.

He scorned a verbal explanation as being unimpressive.

Bridget had collected what she wanted for sweeping the parlour, tea leaves for keeping down the dust, a broom, a dust-pan, a duster, and some large dust-sheets for covering the furniture, and she was just entering the room when a horrible figure sprang out from behind the door.

Its face was hidden in a cage of wire netting which hung loosely by a gauze attachment from the brim of a wide-brimmed hat; the arrangement was continued downwards by ample folds of the same thin material tucked inside the collar of a dilapidated coat. The ankles were covered by bulging anklets. The hands were encased in huge yellow leather gloves, and held a fumigator which was instantly put into action.

Bridget stood speechless, as the figure sprang past her.

Recovering her presence of mind she followed to the garden in time to see Denny, for of course it was he, empty a swarm of bees from a straw skep into a bar-frame hive that stood open beside his borage patch.

He had quieted the bees with the smoke before doing it, but for all that, Bridget, unprotected by bee-veil and gloves, decided to return to her sweeping rather than to stay near them.

The borage blossoms were to supply pollen when the bees did not care to fly far for it on windy days.

Denny had kept his plans a secret, which was all the easier to do as he and Alf Flynn were partners in the venture, and the carpentering of the hive was done at Alf's home with the help of Edmund. The mysterious little box too, that came through the post, with the fine Ligurian Queen Bee they had bought, was handed in to Alf, who was on the watch for it.

That year the young bee-keepers had a goodly number of one-pound sections of honey-filled comb, which they sold at the price then current of a shilling each.

Once a swarm of theirs got away and settled on a tree in a neighbour's garden. She, kind soul, hastened to tell the boys, who brought a straw skep and shook their property into it. Then she lent them a large cloth to wrap it in and they went off home, and housed the bees in the new hive they had already prepared. Very few accidents happened.

Robert was helping one day to put in the frames that held the new comb-foundations. He was wearing low shoes and had forgotten to protect his ankles, and he got some bad stings in consequence. Indeed so bad were they that he fainted away.

Kathleen was never stung, although she often allowed tired bees to rest on her bare hands.

If any small intruders, such as moths or beetles ventured inside the hives they paid dearly for their temerity. The bees stung them to death and left their bodies on the alighting platform outside. Once a larger intruder was also killed, but being too heavy for removal, it was decently buried with wax in the corner where he fell.

### CHAPTER IX.

#### Aunt Fanny's Pigs

Those unhappy people who have never eaten stuffed pork steaks have missed a savoury dinner, and one that called for no large outlay.

Pork chops can be had and are good too; but pork chops have bones. Pork steaks have none.

Bridget knew how to cook them to perfection.

It was after a pork steak dinner that Denny gave his family a dissertation on the subject of pigs.

He maintained that they were the cleanest animals alive; but he had to pause there to allow Robert's shout of derisive laughter to subside.

"Yes," said Denis, "and it's proved by their lying down and rolling in every puddle they come to."

"Why, Denny, how can you say such a thing?" expostulated Kathleen.

"Well, it's this way; when they feel dust and dirt on their —" here he paused for a word, and his father gravely suggested "fur."

"No," said Denis laughing, "not fur, Pater, on their coats, they naturally" ("being such clean animals," said Kathleen) "want to wash it off."

"Now, that's what I call logical reasoning, Den," said Robert, "you'll be head of your class in Euclid yet."

At this point in the discussion the postman's double-knock was heard, and Bridget brought in a letter for Mrs. Donnelly, who, seeing that it was marked "Immediate" opened and read it at once.

"It's from Aunt Fanny," she announced "and she wants one of the boys to do something for her this afternoon. I'll read you what she says:—

Dearest Kate,

I've arranged all the furniture at last and the house is comfortable now. Come up and see it as soon as you can.

I couldn't bear to see the pigsties empty, so I've bought two fine young pigs from Pat Molloy this side of Rathfarnham.

I wish Robert or Denis would do me a good turn and drive them up here at once. Pat's too busy to do it himself, and I'm afraid if they're left long he'll sell them over my head.

In great haste,

Fanny."

Robert had to go back to the office, so Denis was the one to go to Rathfarnham. He took a stout stick, for Bridget warned him he might have to use its persuasion to get the "creatures" along.

Perhaps a short tow-rope might have served the purpose better.

There was a little delay while Pat Molloy was rounding them up, for there were many puddles about the farmyard, and of course such clean animals had to wash in each one before appearing on the public road. By the time the gates swung to behind them, Denny was quite willing to excuse them from any more ablutions; but the pigs were not willing to excuse themselves.

They washed, and rewashed, and then washed again, and all Denny's persuasiveness with the big stick could not prevent it. He wished he had accepted Pat's offer of a rope or two.

When they were not washing in the puddles, they were botanizing under the hedges, and they never by any chance chose the same side of the road at the same time.

Denis was sure he walked a good dozen of Irish miles back and forth distributing persuasions that grew more and more persuasive as the botanizing grew more and more absorbing.

He felt afraid at last that he should not reach Rockbrook before dark, and having no lantern might lose the pigs.

When he was almost in despair a cheery voice hailed him and looking round he saw a man and cart. The man asked if those were Mrs. Grant's pigs, and on Denny's saying they were, told him he was a friend of Pat's and that Pat had seen him passing and asked him to look out for them and give them a lift in his empty cart.

The man was well used to the ways of pigs and soon caught them.

Denny mounted the driver's seat beside him and in a short time they arrived at their destination.

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