

BOYS AND GIRLS

The Flag Station.

A CANADIAN STORY.

(Emily P. Weaver, in 'Sunday at Home.')

It was a wild March morning, cold and windy, as March mornings often are in Canada. Great white drifts were piled up all round the little farm-house, and it looked drearier inside than out. Only the day before, all the furniture had been sold by auction, but half the things were already taken away.

Everything was in confusion. The kitchen was the only room that had a fire in it, and even that did not look cosy. In one corner was a collection of pots and pans, in another some old harness, and in a third a heap of rugs and pillows that had done duty

'I guess he has. You said he was pretty rich, didn't you?' said John, thoughtfully.

'Yes, I believe so. I guess you'll have a high old time with him, and some day you'll come back to see Josh and me and the old farm.'

'I wish we hadn't to go,' said Winnie, with a sigh. 'I'm so afraid Uncle John may not like us.'

'I wish you hadn't. Josh and me would have given anything to keep you here, but it wouldn't have been right, dear. You see, we have our own six to think of, and your mother said when she was dying that we must write to John Shaw and ask him to look after you. We had to do what she said, darling.'

'Yes,' assented Winnie, sadly. 'We'll try to be good, won't we, John?'

'Of course,' said John, 'and it's fine going

hear the bells. Josh is coming, I'm sure. Run and look, John.'

'Yes, he's there. He's driving Tim; isn't it fun?' cried John, dancing excitedly on one leg. But Winnie flung herself into Mrs. Sinclair's arms and burst into tears.

'There, there, dear,' she said, soothingly. 'Be a little woman and don't cry. Remember, Winnie, there's only you to take care of John now.'

'But I feel so lonely,' sobbed Winnie.

'Yes, sweet, I know; but listen; God says he'll be a father to you now. What was that your mother said to you the night she died?'

Winnie checked her sobs with a great effort and said, softly, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father . . . Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.'

'Well, little one, don't forget that. God knows exactly what he is doing with you, and you may be sure he'll take care of you.'

'Come, Winnie; Tim won't stand, Mr. Sinclair says,' cried John, rushing in and seizing the basket of sandwiches. 'Be sure you don't forget anything, Winnie, and do be quick. Good-bye, Mis' Sinclair.'

Five minutes later, Mrs. Sinclair was at the gate watching Tim galloping down the road at the top of his speed. Winnie looked back and waved her hand, but John was too much excited with the present to have any thoughts for what had been left behind.

'Isn't this fine?' he cried. 'Mr. Sinclair, when I'm a man I'll buy Tim from you if you'll sell him.'

'Oh, I'll sell him quick enough, if you give me my price,' said Josh, with a smile. 'But look, that's the station. Hurry up, old Tim, we've no time to spare.'

He tied Tim to a fence at a safe distance from the line; then shouldering the little trunk led the children into the waiting-room, and set them in chairs by the great, round stove to toast their toes while he bought their tickets.

'Don't you move from here till I come back,' were his last words. 'The train won't be in for five minutes yet.'

Winnie's pale little face was strangely calm now. With a child's simplicity she was resting on the beautiful thought of God's loving care for them, and she no longer felt afraid. But as that slow five minutes went by, John's excitement increased till he could not sit still.

'Oh, Winnie, I'm sure Mr. Sinclair has forgotten us,' he gasped. 'Isn't it time now?'

'No,' said Winnie, putting her arm round his neck. 'It's only three minutes to twelve yet.'

'Winnie, I hear the train. I'm sure I do. We must go and get in. There, it is whistling. Oh, do be quick.'

'No, we must wait,' said Winnie. 'Mr. Sinclair will be sure to come in time.'

John was not by any means sure of it; but just as the big engine went puffing past the waiting-room, Josh pushed open the door, and gathered up all their belongings. John waited no longer, but was rushing frantically towards the train, when Josh took him by the collar.

'Wait a bit, laddie, there is no hurry. You'll get under the wheels if you don't mind.'

It was as much as the little fellow could do to scramble up the high step at the end of the car; but he despised assistance, and long before Winnie and her bundles had been put 'on board' the train, he had established himself by a window in the middle of the long carriage.

He almost forgot to say good-bye to Josh,



JOHN SEIZED THE RED FLAG AND WAVED IT MADLY.

for a bed. Table and chairs had gone, and the remains of a meal stood on a packing-case.

In the midst of the muddle was a small wooden trunk, and on it, close together, sat two children. The elder, a little girl, dressed in a black hood and frock, looked sad and rather frightened; but her brother, whose brown overcoat had a black band on the left sleeve, gazed about him with eager curiosity.

A motherly-looking woman was busy packing slices of bread and ham into a little basket, but often stopped to nod and smile at the children.

'Now, dears,' she said at last, 'we're quite ready; let Josh come as soon as he likes. Are your feet good and warm? It's a long drive to the station.'

'Mine are,' said John. 'Mrs. Sinclair, were you ever in the cars? Is it as jolly as sleighing?'

'You'll soon see, laddie. Mind you get Winnie to write, and tell me all about it, an' how you like Merton, and whether your Uncle Johnny has any cows and horses.'

to Merton by the cars. Do you know, Mis' Sinclair, I've wanted to ride in the cars ever since I was little,' and he put his hand down to within a foot of the floor.

'Yes, that's right, my man. You're a lucky boy, ain't you?'

But she put her hand to her eyes to rub away a tear, for within a month the children had lost both parents by typhoid fever, and everything had been sold to pay their father's debts. The children were quite unprovided for, but Mrs. Sinclair had written to Mrs. Golding's brother, asking him to take charge of them. In reply he had sent two lines, saying that he had changed his address, that the children might be sent to him at Merton, but that he thought that his brother-in-law had behaved very badly not to provide for them. This, at least, was what Mrs. Sinclair made out, after an hour's study of his scrawly note, and in her opinion, it boded ill for the happiness of the poor children. However, she did her utmost to hide from them her uneasiness about their future.

'Listen,' she said, after a brief silence. 'I