

They got some string from the stable, that had often been used for reins before, and Julie tied one end to Puff's right arm and the other end to Chubbie's left, flicked a switch in the air, and cried "Geoe up!" and away pranced horse and driver, and ran round the yard, and into the garden, and all down the walks, pausing at sundry nooks and corners, where Julie stopped to pay calls, and imaginary persons came out and patted the horses' backs, and asked the driver many questions as to their speed and worth; and Puff ground his teeth to imitate the champing of a bit, and pawed the earth till the dust flew up like a cloud! When Julie had paid half a dozen visits, and the horses were become hot and breathless, she drove them back into the yard, and completed the play by tying Puff up for two minutes in the stable, where he champed and snored and pawed, and made believe to eat a little hay. Then he had to be untied, and the restive horse changed at once into a grocer's errand-boy, very helpful to his master, Chubbie, who spoke in a gruff voice, and sold sugar and butter and tea.

The counter was an old box turned upside down, covered with small heaps of gravel and leaves and twigs; and Julie was the lady who came to buy, coming as a different customer each time; and Chubbie with her sleeves tucked up, just like Mr. Tozer's round the corner, wrapped up gravel in pieces of newspapers, which the errand-boy carried to various addresses far and near, for the customers lived, some in the stable and some down at the very bottom of the garden, and Puff had to run with all his might, as there was not a minute to lose, for the grocer would put down a parcel with, "Mind you be quick, John!" in a very gruff voice, and Puff was the most conscientious errand-boy you could ever come across.

"Half a pound of tea," said Julie, "a pat of butter, and a pennyworth of sweets for my little girls."

The grocer said "Yes mum," after every article, and touched his forehead with a small fat finger, just as Mr. Tozer did, and bawled, "More paper, John; more string, John!" when suddenly—

Whirr! whirr! whirr! flapped two pairs of wings over their heads, and, "The pigeons!" screamed the grocer, the errand-boy, and the customer in a breath; and Emperor and Joan alighted on the stable roof, and craned their glossy necks—

"Coothra-coo!" said the Emperor, politely. "Coothra-coo!"

Joan curtsied and spread her tail, and Julie tore into the house to look at the hall clock.

"Seven and a half minutes past six," she said when she returned. "Remember, seven and a half minutes past six, both of you, if I forget."

"Seven and a half minutes past six," repeated dutifully the grocer and the errand-boy; though their remembering went for nothing at all, as they forgot five minutes after. And Julie never forgot. No, Julie could be trusted, and they knew that. Although she was often in the way, and only one of the little ones, Julie never forgot.

The game went on again. "Shop" was such an interesting one. The grocer got behind his counter once more, and the errand-boy fetched more string; the lady bought more sweets for her little girls, and "John" carried the parcels home. The evening sun got behind the chimney-tops: his parting rays touched with a golden glory the grocer's curly head.

"Ave the pigeons come back, Miss Julie?" asked Manda, leaning her bare red elbows on the sill of the open kitchen window, taking in a deep draught of the sweet summer air, that blew refreshing upon her heated face after the long Saturday's work.

"Just come back," answered the grocer before Julie could speak. "Six and a half minutes past seven."

"Bless me!" ejaculated Manda, "it isn't seven o'clock yet, surely. You've looked at the clock wrong."

"No, no, Chubbie; you've said it upside down," Julie laughed. "Seven and a half minutes past six. Have you looked now, Manda?"

"Not yet, Miss Julie," said the rosy-cheeked maid. "I'm not never finished on Saturdays."

"Would you like to buy anything from my shop, Manda?" asked the grocer, with a shrewd eye to business—and that was really remarkably like Mr. Tozer round the corner.

"Well," said Manda, good-naturedly, "what 'ave you got there?"

"Butter and biscuits, and lollipops, and—and—soap," said the grocer, insinuatingly.

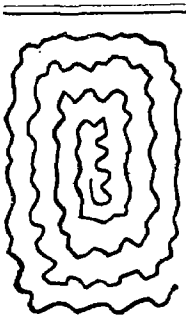
"You 'avent got a bottle of ginger-beer, now, 'ave you?" Manda asked. "I'd like a bottle of that more'n anything, if you've got it."

"Bottle of ginger-beer, John!" shouted the grocer.

"John" dived behind the counter, and fetched up a short stumpy bit of wood.

"Take it at once to Mrs. Manda's," was the order.

(To be continued.)



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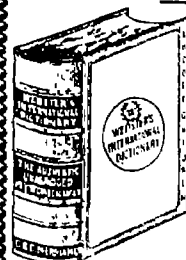
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