

ing to see them come out at the front door. A great bird soared over the tree and Christy watched it skimming the air till it disappeared from sight beyond the hill. Then a flock of sheep passed down the road, and he got up and leaned over the fence looking after them till they were out of sight. When he went back to his seat under the tree, the talk in the sitting-room had ceased, and, pretty soon, looking over the fields, Christy saw the twins climbing the stone wall across the mowing lot.

"Why, they went out of the side door and never told me at all," he said. Then he began to cry, but stopped directly, and started to run after them.

The artist has made a quaint study of Christy as he looked that summer day in the comfortable but rustic costume that little boys in the country wore at that time. His plump feet and ankles were bare below his little blue jean trousers, and he wore a round, long-sleeved apron of blue-checked gingham, starched and ironed smoothly, for Mother Brown always kept her little boy clean and tidy, however busy she might be. His big straw hat, set far back on his head, made a frame for his innocent face—a round bud of a mouth, a little nose sprinkled with freckles and big brown, honest eyes.

Christy was not thinking at all of his looks or his clothes as he scrambled over the fence, and ran as fast as his little legs would carry him across the lot after the girls. They were so far in advance that Christy could not possibly have overtaken them if they had not stopped to pick some raspberries which were hanging, ripened, on a bush by the pasture-wall. They were starting to go on when Christy appeared before them, rosy and panting from his hard run.

"Why, Christy Brown!" said Delia, rather sharply. "What *did* you follow us for?"

"I—I want to go to the picnic," panted Christy, "along with you and Julia."

"But you can't go," said Delia. "We can't possibly take you this time."

It's a girls' picnic. There won't be a boy there—not a single boy."

The tears gathered in Christy's eyes.

"I'll be real good. I won't make a bit of trouble," he pleaded.

Julia's tender heart reproached her when she saw Christy's tears.

"Don't cry, Chrissy-boy," she said soothingly. "We'll bring you some nice things from the picnic. Go back home, like a good little boy, and I'll give you my china weather-man when I come home to-night."

"Yes, go right along back," chimed in Delia, decidedly. "We can't let you go. Now if you make a fuss about it I'll tell mother how you bother us."

Christy turned back with a dreadful pain and disappointment swelling in his heart. He could hardly see

where he was going, the tears came so fast. While the twins hurried on their way he slowly stumbled across the pasture, crept over a wall, tumbled down the other side into a bed of brakes and ferns, and lay there, sobbing, broken-heartedly.

The breezes fanned his hot little cheeks, bees went humming and buzzing over his head, and across the fields came the sweet odors of ripening apples and new-mown clover. By and by Christy's grief grew a little lighter and he began to think of Julia's promise to bring him something nice from the picnic. He wondered what it would be.

Turning over on the brakes he half-opened his eyes, then opened them wider and wider and sat up. There on a stump only a few feet away was perched a beautiful white dove, holding its head on one side and watching him with one bright eye.

"Pretty birdie, pretty birdie!" said Christy, reaching out his hand and speaking very softly, quite expecting that the dove would fly away. Instead of that, it hopped from the stump and came nearer and nearer. Plainly it was very tame. Christy looked about, and seeing a cluster of berries hanging from a bush by the wall picked them and reached out his hand to the dove. The pretty

bird hopped nearer and nearer and began to peck them from his hand. Christy was delighted. He was very fond of pets, and there were none on all the farm excepting the sober gray cat and Jim's speckled calf.

"I will carry the pretty bird home and perhaps some rainy day papa will make me a dove-house," he thought.

But when he tried to take the dove, it fluttered out of his hand and skimmed away several rods across the field. Christy followed, stepping carefully to avoid frightening it. He had almost caught it again when it made another flight, and again Christy followed. So, led by the bird, Christy crossed the field and reached the edge of the wood—the great, dark wood where he had never yet been.

Once he held the dove for a few minutes in his hand. He smoothed its soft feathers, felt how its

little heart fluttered, then took off his hat and placed the bird in it; but it quickly rose, spread its wings and flew into the wood—and into the wood Christy followed.

The trees in the meadow were casting long shadows toward the East when Mother Brown blew the big dinner-horn to call father and the boys up to supper. Everything about the farm-house was tidy and sweet. The breeze fluttered the white window-curtains and lifted the corners of the table-spread in the big sitting room where a tempting supper was waiting. There was cream toast and stewed chicken, and cherry sauce, and some of Mother's splendid gingerbread, fresh from the oven.

