

The Rockwood Review

"What's your mother want to cut with them," she said.

Billy was almost undone; ingenious as his brain was, he could not remember at that moment a single one of the uses to which women put scissors.

"She wants them very sharp," he said.

"But what for?" persisted the woman.

Then a scene he had witnessed that morning in his aunt's kitchen flashed before his eyes.

"She wants them to cut fish scales with," he said.

The woman held the shining pair and the little buttonhole scissors and even the dull pair jealously to her.

"Why couldn't she cut them with a knife?" she said.

Billy looked at her patiently. "It's so hard to cut their fins with a knife," he said; and, besides, all Mrs. Andrews's knives have gone to be ground, too."

"Oh, well, take her these," the woman said, and gave him a small, almost black pair with one of the points broken off. "They're quite good enough for that purpose."

Billy thanked her warmly and politely, but sighed when he reached Jimmie. "I never saw anything like women are," he said; "you'd think their blessed old scissors were made of gold."

They found a sheltering rock and fell to work immediately—Jimmie upon Billy's thick, light hair. He sawed at it and struggled with it both with the blunt old scissors and their penknives for fully ten minutes, till Billy's eyes were full of tears at the constant dragging, and his head was cut and

scratched in more than one place.

"The worst of it is," Jim said, "it's got such a crooked kind of look; some of it's long and some of it's short."

There came a lightning flash of another scene across Billy's brain. He had stayed in the country once where there was a large family of boys and girls. And he remembered a morning when the mother had taken the whole shock-headed tribe into the back yard and acted the barber's part to each head.

"I remember she used a basin," he said excitedly—"jammed it on the back of their heads, and then clipped the hair evenly all round. What a goat I was not to think of it before. We'll have to get a basin, Jimmie."

Jimmie looked doubtful. "How could we?" he said.

"Oh, you'll have to go this time," Billy said. "They'd only stare at my hair; I suppose it looks pretty donkeyish just now. You go down to one of the houses over there—not the third one, 'cause that's where I went—and say your mother wants to know if they'll lend her a basin to make a pudding in. Say she's smashed all hers, if they ask."

Jimmie went slowly, repeating his speech all the way.

He entirely forgot that Billy had said "not the third house," and as the first one had a man sitting on the veranda, and the second an unpleasant-looking dog, that was the one he chose.

"If you please, my mother says she'll be—she's making a pudding, and—and she'll be much obliged—she'll be much obliged—She's got no basin, and will you lend her a basin?"