

Allan beat time with his foot. "Where's Bet's bed?" asked the Ape, appearing suddenly on the porch with Bet's tousled flaxen head on his arm, and the rest of her very plump person disposed conveniently. "She's snoring like a house afire."

"You an' your swings an' your monkey shines!" scolded Sally as she gathered Bet to her bosom. "You'll break her blessed neck yet."

He swung himself to the edge of the porch. "Women is scare cats," he remarked to Allan with a chuckle.

"They mean well," Allan spoke apologetically.

"Dunno what they mean. Spoilin' fun, that's their long suit. But," cheerfully, "sakes alive! who cares?"

An hour later Sally bustled out and broke up an interesting conversation between the two on the porch, and ordered the boy to bed.

"It's an Ape all right," said Allan, as he watched the bare feet capering nimbly up the bannister, "but a quaint and merry one. Says he hasn't cried a tear since he first found out that crying didn't get him the thing he cried for. How's that for philosophy?"

Sally gave it as her opinion that he'd wear her to a "shadder." "A new interest in life, says Miss Marion. Well," with something between a sigh and a snarl, "I'm past the time o' day for new interests, an' so be you, Mr. Allan."

"I like that queer little beggar." An unwonted spice of youth twinkled in Allan's kindly eyes and made ripples of mirth in his kindly voice. "Take my word for it, there'll be something doing."

There was. A real love affair sprang up between Sally and Sally's little lamb. Bet, with joyous friskings, followed the housekeeper everywhere. The Ape followed nothing but his own sweet will. From his airy perch in the oak he surveyed the world by day and was vaguely glad that it was beautiful. At night he talked with Allan.

"Ever been in the country before," asked the latter, as he filled his pipe. "Once, eh? What did you do?"

"I sot a pigeon on a banty hen's egg. She hatched out a chicken all neck and nakedness. It was fun to watch her feed it. Say," with a chuckle of real joy, "it was great. She'd open its mouth an' stuff the feed in, same as pigeons are used to, an' when the banty chick'd spit it out, an' fall to scratchin' with his toes, an' helpin' hisself in little pecks she'd tackle the job over again. He kept her so busy she couldn't coo for sour apples."

"'Twas hardly a square deal," said Allan when he had finished laughing.

"She'd always hatched pigeons. I thought a change'd do her good."

Through the open window floated the mellow laugh of Allan and the shrill one of the Ape. Sally shook her head wonderingly. "I never expected to see him take to one so full of deviltry," she sighed.

"Seems a bond of sympathy between the big quiet man and the little garrulous lad," said Marion. "I don't know when I've heard Allan laugh like that."

"The Ape's as nimble with his tongue as with his toes; he is uncanny with both. I'm glad there's no more 'new interests' coming our way." But there were. Five miles away the summer cottage of the Beals towered loftily on the river's bank. Mrs. Beal, kindest of women, fired by Marion's example, had opened her doors to two pale-faced mites who had lately lost their mother. Not content, she had gone to a crowded room in the ward and borne from it a black-eyed Italian baby. The last named had no sooner arrived at the cottage than he sickened with measles. Because of all these happenings came a frantic note of appeal to Marion. Could she—would she—let the well pair play in her back yard for a fortnight? It seemed hard to send them back to the dust and heat just as their cheeks were getting a hint of colour. Besides, strong plea this, Miss Thornhill, best of trained nurses, sweetest of women, would accompany the children and take full charge.

"Two kids and a grown-up—we can't do it," said Marion.

"It wouldn't be for long," volunteered Sally.

"The more the merrier," said Allan with a recklessness which was brand new, and very funny.

So four children had the homestead for a playground, four children laughed and sang, caught glimpses of a real home, a real happiness, and, yes, a real heaven as the days went by.

So pleasant did the genial master of the place find the new order of things, and the new presence, a slim fair woman in nurse's garb, that when the lady who had loaned the babies, so to speak, announced after long delay that all danger of contagion was over and that

she would resume charge, he flatly refused to listen.

"Just when things are going swimmingly," he grumbled. "Not a bit of it. Write to Mrs. Beals, Marion, and tell her to invest in a new lot. Packed plenty of lunch have you, Miss Thornhill? Let's see, one, two, three, four, you and I make six. We're all here. Betty's been hunting bait all morning. Drowned! Why we're taking the scow, Marion, you couldn't tip her with a team of horses. Don't forget to notify your friend that we refuse, positively refuse to deliver the goods."

Marion looked after the party and smiled. "I owe West one," was her enigmatic comment.

"The children have had a glorious month," Miss Thornhill was saying as they took the path through the wood, "but I feel that we are imposing on good nature."

"Listen," came the eager response, "I'm the gainer. This place is going to be home to these kids every summer that comes."

"You are very kind," the words weren't much in themselves, but the glance which went with them was one of admiration, shy but genuine.

"Oh," grandly, "I could do a lot if I knew how to go about it. It would be easy sailing so long as they all kept well."

"I know how you feel. A sick child has a way of giving one heartache."

Silence for awhile. The ripening barley went swiss-ss, swiss-ss in the wind. The rushes by the mill-stream tried to do the same, but their notes were not so sweet or sibilant. The clang of a reaper came from the veritable hills of gold across the stream, and with it the faint perfume of ripening fruit.

"It is a beautiful world," said the nurse, and her eyes were full of tears.

Allan had seen it all before. "Beautiful," he assented without removing his gaze from her face. "I wish—" here Sally's little lamb fell in the stream and had to be taken out, and coaxed and bribed to stop bleating.

They had reached the little dock by this time, and between getting the flock on board the scow and putting the lunch basket beyond the reach of temptation, there was no time for sentiment. It was the Ape who helped the matter along. He lay stretched out at Allan's feet looking up at him with eyes out of all proportion to the weazened face they lighted.

"Say," he broke out at length, "did you mean it when you told her," pointing a brown fore finger at the nurse, "we was goin' to keep right on comin'?"

Allan nodded.

"Will she," again the finger did execution, "keep right on comin'? In the Home the matron stays right along."

Allan looked at the woman beside him. Her cheeks were rosy, her eyes cast down. "I'm in hopes Miss Thornhill will do the same," he said, and fell to rowing furiously.

They came home at sunset and found Marion entertaining her husband and brother, home from their long holiday, with an account of the founding of a new country home for waifs and strays. West was looking anything but pleased.

"I'll put a stop to this nonsense," he snarred: "Allan's in his dotage."

"Allan's in love," corrected Marion, "so is the girl. Here they come hand in hand now for congratulations."

"This is your doings, but I must make the best of it, I suppose."

"You certainly must," she took Jack's arm and limped forward to meet the happy pair. Then she turned to West.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and (unmarried men) gang aft a-gley."

"It is my turn to quote Bobby," she said, with a saucy shake of her brown head.

Ancient Hostelries

The village inn at Addington, England, has been tenanted by the members of one family since the reign of Henry VII. On the death of the mother of the present hostess she left no son, but only three daughters survived her. The three sisters in turn took possession, and the present hostess is the last of them. The Jolly Millers' inn at Newnham, Cambridgeshire, has been kept by a family named Musk for the last 400 years. It is recorded in Cambridge annals that Queen Elizabeth once stopped here and drank a quart of "ye olde English ayle" without getting down from her horse.