

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Pumpkin Auction.

(Hattie Vose Hall, in the 'Congregationalist and Christian World.')

We had scarlet fever in Centerville just after school opened in the fall, and they had to shut right up again for four weeks. Mamma didn't know what to do. She didn't know how she could get through with the fall cleaning with so many of us around all day long, and so Papa said:

'Why don't you send the children up to Father's? There's plenty of room for five boys on a farm.'

We boys just shouted. It's great fun up to Grandpa Archer's. We help milk, and feed the pigs, and row on the pond, and go in swimming, and blackberrying, and hunt eggs for Huldah, and go nutting, and lots more things. Mamma said,

'I can't let the baby go, but if Grandpa and Huldah would like the other children for a visit, they can go.'

So we went, for we knew Grandpa would want us. He likes us ever so much, 'specially me, for I'm named for him. Mamma told us we must get all our things into two trunks, and it was a tight squeeze, for of course we had to take our bats and balls and games, and there had to be so much room taken up with collars and neckties and stockings, and things like that.

It's only thirty miles to Hillsboro', and it didn't take long on the cars, and Grandpa's man Billy met us, with old Tom and the surrey. Huldah and Grandpa were both glad to see us. Huldah says it makes things lively to have a lot of boys around the house.

It was too late to ride home on the loads of hay, so we didn't do that, but there was lots to do. Grandpa let us put up a circling-bar in the barn chamber, and we fellows practiced a lot rainy days. Stevie does real well for a little fellow. One day he and I were playing the bar with a flying trapeze, and Stevie was sitting on it, and I was hanging by my knees, and I slipped somehow, and knocked Stevie right out onto the floor, and made a great bump on his forehead, just like a big purple plum. But he didn't cry. Papa says he thinks his children must be extra thick-headed, or they'd have been banged to pieces long ago.

'Well, one day Hal had a letter from Mamma, and she said the Andersons had got burned out. It couldn't have been much of a fire, it was the tiniest bit of a house, but it was all the one they had, and it wasn't insured. And Mr. Anderson was at the Banks fishing, and Mrs. Anderson had been doing washings to earn money, and the children did errands for people after school. And now their little house was burned up.

'I shouldn't think God would have let it happen,' I said, 'Mrs. Anderson's a real good lady.'

'That doesn't make any difference,' Gene said, 'So was Job, and the Lord let lots of things happen to him, and I thinks boils are as bad as fires, for I had one on my neck once.'

But Grandpa said we musn't blame the Lord because some one left the matches where the Anderson baby could get them—that's the way it got set. And I think Grandpa's right, too. I felt like blaming the Lord once, when I stepped on a wasp's nest up in the swamp. Can't they just sting, though? They bit my leg in five places, great white bites. But Papa said the Lord had given me eyes, and if I didn't use them, I had only myself to blame. But you see, I wasn't looking down, I was after cat-tails, and they were high up, so I didn't see the nest. Anyway, if it was all my fault, I got punished, and I'll never step into a yellow jacket's nest again.

Well, so Hal said, 'Let's take up a collection for the Andersons, and put it in an envelope, and just call it, "Aid for the fire sufferers," and send it to Mary and Grace by mail.'

So Hal put in ten cents—we'd just had our week's allowance from home—and 'Gene

put in seven, and Stevie three. (He doesn't have but five cents a week.) I didn't have a single cent left, and I was ashamed. I'd spent it all up at Miss Abigail's little shop. She's a lame lady, and she has fine tops, and I'd bought one, and some court-plaster for the cut on my thumb, and some other things. And 'Gene said: 'That's only twenty cents. We can't send that little bit of money.'

'Let's earn some,' said I. 'There must be some way.'

'I don't like to ask Grandpa for money for any little thing we do for him,' said Hal.

Neither did any of us. But he came up into the barn chamber for some nails he keeps up there, and he saw we were interested in something, and he said, 'What's up, boys?' and so we told him.

'The summer people had a fair in the town hall last week,' he said. 'Why don't you have one?'

'Why, Grandpa,' I said, 'we can't knit and embroider!'

'I did a lamp-mat on a spool and pins, once,' said Hal.

'I can make a cat's cradle and take it off the first time,' said Stevie.

He thought a cat's cradle was fancywork, 'cause you do it with string.

'I did "God Bless Our Home," in cross-stitch, when I was getting well of the mumps,' I said, 'but I wouldn't want to do it again; it took weeks, and we want to help the Andersons right away.'

'Well,' said Grandpa, 'you can have a sale here in the front yard, and I'll put the big tent up for you to have it in, if you can find anything on the farm or garden to sell, except the stock. You'd better look the garden over, and see if you can't think up a plan by noon. I'll give a dollar for the fire relief fund to the boy with the best plan, and I'll ask you at dinner.'

Well, we all scattered at that, and I happened to think of my pumpkins. Grandpa told me when I first came that I could have as many pumpkins as I wanted, to take home so Bridget could make pies—we're all very fond of pumpkin pie—and so I cut my initials on the six biggest ones. There they were, all yellow and ripe, and 'R. L. A.' in white letters. They looked fine. And there were ever so many besides; more than Grandpa and Billy and Huldah could eat in a year. So I had an idea. When we got to the dinner-table I could hardly wait for Grandpa to say grace before I told it, but he said:

'Wait, Rob, I'm going to begin at the other end. Have you any plan, Stevie?'

'Yes, sir,' said Stevie. 'I'm going to pick lots of those pretty colored beans, and string 'em for necklaces. I'll buy one myself if other people don't want it. They're fine to dress up in when we play Indian.'

'What is your plan, Hal?'

'I thought perhaps Huldah would let me make bouquets, and sell them. There are asters and sweet peas and salvia left.'

Hal can do the prettiest things with flowers. Then Grandpa asked 'Gene, and he said he'd make some bows and arrows, and

then I told my idea, and Grandpa said it was the best, and gave me the dollar for the fund. Grandpa said Hal could make his bouquets, and 'Gene his bows and arrows, and Stevie his necklaces, and have little booths to sell them in, but I could have the big tent for my idea, and I could name the sale. So I named it a Pumpkin Auction, and we had it Thursday afternoon. 'Gene made some posters, and we nailed 'em to the trees on the village common, and we had a crowd, mostly summer people, for lots of them stay late in Hillsboro'. The posters said:

PUMPKIN AUCTION!
THURSDAY P. M. AT HILLVIEW FARM.
COME EVERYBODY FOR SWEET
CHARITY'S SAKE.

'Gene got that quotation out of a book. So everybody came. I had twenty-seven pumpkins to auction off. Pumpkins were so plenty that fall I didn't know as I could sell them all, but I did. Lots of children wanted them for Jack-a-lanterns, and it was fun to be auctioneer, too. They'd begin with a cent, and go up to twenty or thirty, and one man gave me a dollar for one. He didn't bid on it, he just picked it out, and gave me the money. I thought it was too much, and I told him so, but he only laughed, and said, 'Oh, I value the engraving!' It was one with my initials on. 'And then it's "for sweet charity's sake," you know,' he said. So I was glad 'Gene put that on the posters.

Hal sold fifty bouquets—all he had—for ten cents apiece, and Stevie sold eight strings of beans, and Gene sold all his things. So we got ever so much money, and Grandpa gave us a check for it, and we sent it to Papa to give Mrs. Anderson. And what do you think she did when he took it to her? Why, she cried! Wasn't that funny? I guess I wouldn't cry if any one brought me all that money. But Mamma said it was only because she was so pleased.

We went home the next week, because school began again. But we hated to go, we had had such a jolly time at Grandpa's and the Pumpkin Auction was the best fun of all.

A Song in the Night.

(Marion Brier, in the 'American Messenger.')

There was always so much to be done in the little brown house. From morning to night it was hurry, hurry, hurry, and even then it seemed as if the work was never done. Six days in the week Ma O'Brien bent over the wash-tub or the ironing-board from early morning until night, while the smell of steaming soapsuds and the fierce heat from the cook-stove filled the little room where the children played noisily. Six days in the week, Katie, the oldest of the little flock, flew about from early morning until night, always trying her best to catch up with the piled-up work that was waiting to be done, and never quite being able to do it. There were the meals to get, and the dishes to wash, baking to do, and such an amount of sweeping and scrubbing and dusting, for Katie did like to see everything bright and clean, but the children scattered things about almost faster than she could pick them up. Then each of the children must have clean faces and hands and neatly brushed hair. In her zeal to accomplish this last undertaking, Johnnie and Jimmie, the twins, declared that she was likely to brush out all their hair and wash their hands and faces all away. Then there were quarrels and disputes to be settled, tears to be wiped away, and Johnnie and Jimmie must be gotten out of mischief a hundred times a day; Mary must be persuaded to wipe the dishes, and to have her hair curled; frail little Patsy must be comforted when the pain in his back was bad; the baby's bumps must be kissed well again, and there were dozens of other things

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