

BOYS AND GIRLS

Old Jake.

(By Lucy L. Weedon; Author of 'Jenny's Bird,' etc.)

'What will America look like, mother?' said little Alice.

'I know,' shouted Alec. 'It will be a thick wood, with bears and things walking about.'

'Oh, mother,' Alice whispered, 'I wish we weren't going! Couldn't we go back to England again?'

'No, dearie, I'm afraid we could not,' said mother. 'What would uncle say? Besides, I don't think he would have wanted us to come if we were only to be eaten up by bears, eh?'

It was a great relief to Alice when they reached New York to find that Alec certainly was wrong, for to the little girl's experi-

Uncle Rob had sent a big waggon to the station for them; and his trusty servant, old Jake, stood beside it, only too anxious to welcome his dear master's relations.

But when he would have lifted Alice into the cart, she just screamed with fright, and hid her face in her mother's dress.

'Missy soon learn love old Jake,' said the kind old man, but Alice thought she never would.

Mrs. Graham's husband was dead, and she had had a hard struggle to provide for her two little ones, and so, was very grateful when her brother wrote, offering them a home with him in the Far West.

How pleased he was to see them all, and what a pet he made of little Alice! In half an hour the children seemed quite at home, and were delighted with everything and everybody they saw; at least, with the ex-

'You sit here, Alie,' he said, 'and I'll go and see if I can find you some berries.'

But Alec was so long gone that Alice grew tired of waiting and went to look for him. Of course she did not find him, for the very good reason that each of them was walking in an opposite direction; they were both lost, only, it happened, by chance, that Alec took the way home, whilst Alice went deeper and deeper into the forest. Alec had never intended to leave his little sister alone; he had been afraid to own he did not know where they were, and had gone a short distance to look for the right path and had lost himself again.

After a time, as it began to grow darker, a new fear arose. She remembered Alec's stories about bears, and shuddered to think that they might come in the night and kill her. How she wished she had not disobeyed her Uncle Rob! Then she thought she would kneel down and ask God to take care of her; but just as she folded her hands she heard the bushes behind her crackle and rustle, as though some heavy creature were pushing its way through. She sprang to her feet in terror. But it was no bear that stood before her, only honest old Jake. With a cry of joy Alice sprang towards him, and as he caught her up in his arms she clung to him, crying with joy, and covering his wrinkled black face with kisses.

The old man soothed her gently, calling her his 'little white lily,' and his 'pretty birdie,' so that by the time they reached home she was fast asleep, with her golden head nestling confidently against the old negroe's woolly pate.

Poor Alec! How thankful he was to see his sister again, for he had blamed himself terribly for leading her into mischief. Mother could not thank the old man sufficiently for having found her little daughter, but she held his hand a long time in hers and stroked it softly, and I am quite sure he understood what her heart was too full to say.

From that day Alice lost all fear of a black face; she knew that as warm a heart may beat beneath a dusky skin as beneath a white one; and she knew, too, that had it not been for Jake she might have died in the forest, for Uncle Rob was away from home when Alec reached the house and tearfully owned that he had lost his sister. Jake had started off, there and then, and never rested till he found her.

'And to think I was ever afraid of you!' she said one day to Jake. 'I wish I could do something to show you how much I love you.'

'Do, you, missy?' he replied. 'Would you take a great deal of trouble for me?'

'Of course I would,' said Alice; and then Jake told her how much he wanted to know about his daughter, Chloe, who lived in New York, only he could not write. He told the child how dearly he loved his daughter, and how many years it was since he had seen her. Alice readily undertook to write a letter for the old man, although, through long illness, her own writing and spelling were sadly backward. When she repeated to her mother all Jake had said, Mrs. Graham told her that when Jake's letter was written, Alice might add a line or two from herself, which should be kept a secret from Jake, so that he might have a pleasant surprise one day.

So Jake and Alice sat down side by side to write the letter, and this is how it ran when it was finished:—

'Dear Chloe,—I am ritn' to u for Jake, who i luv verry mutch; he found me and i thort he was a bare, but he was not. Jake says he sends his luv and is well, and please



JAKE AND ALICE SAT DOWN TO WRITE THE LETTER.

enced eyes it seemed that America was very like England. Alec was dreadfully disappointed, but his mother consoled him by saying that no doubt there would be plenty of forest when they reached their new home. Somehow the children had imagined that as soon as the ship got into port their travels would be at an end, but now it seemed to them that the longest part of their journey began. For miles and miles they went by train, and they grew so weary and fretful that their mother was in despair. Then, too, Alice was terrified at the guards and stewards, who were all black men, and the sight of whose merry, good-humored faces sent the delicate little girl into a screaming fit.

So they were all very glad to reach Pine Creek, and know their journey was over.

ception of poor old Jake, and though Alec soon made friends with him, Alice was as foolish as ever in her fear of his black face. Scolding or coaxing had no effect, and Uncle Rob advised her mother just to leave her alone. 'He is such a good old fellow,' he said, 'she can't fail to like him in the end.'

Now Uncle Rob had forbidden the children to go far from the house, because he was afraid they might lose themselves. But Master Alec, who was quite sure he would do nothing of the kind, one day persuaded Alice to play at bear hunters with him; and in the excitement of the game they wandered away further than they knew, and it was only when Alice said she was tired and must rest awhile that it struck Alec he did not quite know where they were.