

The Rockwood Review

"Matches, of course," said Billy; "they were a cent, so you can spend a cent on something and give me half of it."

Jimmie's face was suffused with scarlet.

"I've lost my cent," he said. "I—I think there was a hole in my pocket."

Billy called him names with great vigor and cheerfulness. "We haven't anything left," he said. "Well, we'd better cut along to school now; we're twenty minutes late, and she'll keep us in all lunch time."

It certainly was Miss Metcalfe's firm intention to keep the pair of dilatory comers in for half an hour when lunch-time came, for she would not accept Billy's statement that his aunt kept him to rock the baby, nor yet Jimmie's mumble about the clock being fast.

But at half-past twelve precisely, while she was engaged in delivering two of her youngest pupils to their nurse, the boys slipped away, both from the room and school bounds.

Jimmie looked a trifle anxious

"Don't be such a goat," said Billy; "surely it's worth a bit of a row, and she can't hit even as hard as Aunt. It 'ud be a lot worse for us if we went home without our hair being cut."

Jimmie saw the truth of this and grew cheerful again as they pursued their way towards a favorite wood of theirs some distance away.

"We'll get the hair-cutting over first," Billy said; "then we'll have all the rest of the time to eat the things and smoke. I'll have to go to one of those houses and borrow

scissors. Here, you hang on to some of these apples, only don't go and start on anything before I come back. Promise sure as I die."

Jimmie gabbled through their formula of honor with swift gestures of licking and drying his first finger.

"See my finger wet, see it dry. I'll cut my throat as sure as ever I die—

if eat a thing. Go on, Bill."

Bill "went on." He set his hat perfectly straight, pulled his collar up, and put on his most engaging and innocent expression as he knocked at the door of a small cottage.

"If you please, ma'am," he said to the woman who opened it, "my mother says would you be so kind as to oblige her with the loan of your scissors for half an hour."

The woman looked at him and noticed the air of exceeding respectability he owed to his aunt.

"Where do you live?" she said.

Billy smiled at her to gain time. Then he pointed to a house a fair distance away.

"Why," said the woman, "my friend Mrs. Andrews lives there."

Billy smiled again. "Yes, I know," he said; "my mother and me's just come to stop with her a few days; my father's out of town."

"But hadn't Mrs. Andrews no scissors?" said the woman.

"She'd just sent them to be ground," said Billy; "but Mrs. Andrews said you were so kind you'd be sure to lend my mother a pair."

The woman went inside and returned with three pairs—button-hole scissors, large bright ones, medium-sized dull ones.