

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Double Mistake.

(By Jennie Chappell, Author of 'Raymond's Rival,' etc.)

'Rex! Rex! Where are you? Oh, there you are! I say, Rex, uncle says we may go with him to Buckland, if we get ready at once. But there's not a minute to lose. He's going by the 12.14 train.'

Having raced all round the big garden in search of her brother, Maud panted out her message, and stood breathless, but flushed and sparkling with pleasure.

'Right you are!' rejoined the boy, who was fondling a beautiful white pigeon. 'Just let me put Snowdrop back in her cage—she's led me such a dance after her as never was—and I'll be ready in two ticks.'

He was almost as good as his word, and in

phew and niece—especially the latter, for he was sometimes inclined to show the stern side of his character to Rex—his own little Hughie was as the very apple of his eye, and but for a judicious mother the child must have been sadly spoiled.

Buckland was the name of a farm about ten miles distant, which Mr. Burgess had quite recently purchased. Therefore it possessed all the charm of novelty to these young town-reared folks, and a visit there was deemed a great treat. There were not only stables, cow-sheds and piggeries to be visited, but a stream swarming with fish ran at the end of the shrubbery, and a gentle old pony that might be ridden with or without a saddle grazed in the paddock.

The train was rather late, and while the trio waited at the station, Mr. Burgess went

You know what Hughie is, and if anything did happen—'

'I can't go back now,' said Rex, who could not make up his mind to give up the day's outing. 'I've got my ticket and all; and here comes the train.'

But his face at intervals for the next hour or more showed that the pleasure of the trip was spoiled for him, and Maud felt only a degree less uncomfortable.

They all dined with the farmer's wife and her family, and at the conclusion of the meal Mr. Burgess proposed a walk to a pretty village not far away, where there was a dog for sale.

They had just left the gate, and were crossing the road, when they were met by a telegraph boy.

'Does a Mr. Burgess live at Buckland, can you tell me, sir?' the messenger inquired.

'I am Mr. Burgess, and I am staying here to-day,' replied that gentleman. 'Have you something for me?'

The lad handed him the well-known reddish-yellow envelope, which he tore open, while the brother and sister watched him with anxious eyes.

He stood silent, as if petrified, for a few seconds. Then he said to the messenger, briefly, 'There is no answer—and to the others, 'I must go home at once.'

'Oh, uncle, what is it?' exclaimed Maud, trembling.

'Hugh has met with a serious accident—your aunt does not say what. But I must get home. I shall borrow one of Marlow's horses and ride; that will be the quickest.'

'There isn't a train for two hours.'

He turned and went back to the house, with a white, set face. The young folks stood gazing at one another in dismay.

'It's that!' Rex gasped at length. 'How I wish I had gone and seen after it!'

'Perhaps it isn't. Perhaps it's something quite different,' said Maud, consolingly.

'No, something tells me it's that gunpowder which has done the mischief! Oh, why didn't I go back when I felt I ought? Why did I ever have anything to do with the things?'

He leaned his arm on the top of the low wall and hid his face against it in a passion of misery.

They heard the horse's hoofs come out of the yard and gallop down the road. The next hour seemed interminable.

Maud went into the house, and talked to Mrs. Marlow. She learned that gunpowder explosions were dreadfully dangerous, and often resulted in blinding the victim for life.

She wandered out into the garden again to look for Rex. It was nearly time for them to start towards the station, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Soon it was quite time to be off, and past it. The hour for the train to leave came, but though Mrs. Marlow sent a boy to look for Master Rex, not a trace of him could be discovered.

Mrs. Marlow gave Maud some tea, but the child could hardly swallow it. Her trouble about Hugh was doubled by that on her brother's account. Another hour passed, and evening began to draw in. A horrible conviction seized her that, afraid to face his uncle's displeasure, and the grief of which he felt himself to be the cause, he had run away!

Mr. Marlow himself took the poor little girl home about six. And then they found that Hugh was suffering concussion of the brain from a fall from the hay-loft. He was seriously injured, but the doctor gave more hope than at first. Not a word was said



'I AM MR. BURGESS. HAVE YOU SOMETHING FOR ME?'

an incredibly short space of time both youngsters were dressed and waiting for their uncle at the garden gate, while little cousin Hugh hung round them enviously, half hoping that at the last minute he might be included in the party.

'If you weren't such a mischievous young scamp I dare say you'd be going too,' observed Rex, who, from the height of his fourteen years, felt it right at times to talk in an improving strain to six-year-old Hugh. 'But you will meddle with everything and get into such scrapes that your mother daren't trust you out of her sight. So you get left behind, you see.'

'That will do, now!' said Mr. Burgess, sharply, as he joined them. 'It is not very manly of you to crow over the child, and make him cry. Never mind, Hughie, father will find him a bright sixpence when he comes home to-night.'

Kind as Mr. Burgess was to his orphan ne-

off to speak to the station-master about an expected parcel.

'I say, Maud,' said Rex, uneasily, 'what do you think I've been and done? Left my fire-work stuff on the table in the summer-house! It was seeing Snowdrop on the wing put everything else out of my head. And then you came after me.'

'Fire-work stuff!' repeated Maud. 'But I thought auntie said you were not to make any?'

Rex colored.

'Yes—about the house she meant. I was only going to screw up a few squibs for our gymnastic fete. But I daresay it will be all right. It was only that young Turk of a Hugh I'm thinking of. But he doesn't often play right down the garden unless we're there.'

'Oh, Rex!' said Maud, pale with fear. 'Hadn't you better go back and make sure?