

SECOND THOUGHTS BEST.

"Good-bye, dears. I hope you'll have a good time this afternoon."

It was mother who said it. Nobody ever went away from mother, so the boys declared, without having a good wish as they started.

"But I hope you won't stay late. I mean very late. The days are so long, and it's good to have you come home."

It was Hetty who said this.

"Poor little Het," said Frank, as he turned for a farewell smile at the two faces at the window. "It's too bad this race on the ice came just to-day."

"Yes, it is," assented Rob.

"When she's been shut up in the house so long, and this is the first day she could get out."

"Yes," said Rob again.

"Look here," said Frank, stopping short after they were out of reach of the eyes inside of the window. "Suppose we give this up, and give Hetty her frolic."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Rob, half angrily. "All the boys are going to be out, and it'll be a regular tiptop time. Give it up just to take out a little girl!"

Hetty had had a long illness, and was just able to go out. For several days it had been arranged that on this Saturday afternoon she was to be wrapped up and the boys were to take her on a sled over to the house of Uncle Harry, half a mile away.

The little girl had looked forward to it with such delight as those know who have spent many weary weeks in the house.

Then had come the regatta.

Of course, all the boys in the country around would expect to be there; and equally, of course, Hetty, being an unselfish little girl, said at once that she would remain at home, so that her brothers might go.

"I wouldn't care a bit," went on Frank to his brother as they walked on; "if Hetty wasn't so nice about it. If she cried and made a fuss, as most girls would, I'd have

just told her to shut up. But she didn't."

Rob remembered, though, the tremble of the lip with which his little sister had insisted that the boys should not give up their sport for her sake. So he didn't make any reply, except to quicken his steps, which had slowed as Frank hesitated.

"You don't mean," said Rob presently, "that you would really go back now."

"I will, if you will," said Frank stopping short. "I don't mean but what I want to see the regatta awfully, but—"

"Well, that's just my fix," said Rob, stepping on with a resolute face. "I want to see it awfully, and I am going to see it. Hurry up now."

With one or two swift runs to vary the fast walking the mile was soon covered. They were early. It was scarcely past noon, yet there were already numbers of people gathered on the lakeside.

What a gay scene it was! The ice boats stood decked with bright ribbons, which whirled and danced in the breeze. The ice was alive with skaters, flying this way and that, while on the bank sleighs and cutters, with merry parties and jingling bells, drove up and down. But notwithstanding all, there was a weight at the hearts of our two boys. Rob was by no means inclined to be unkind to his sister. Take them as a family, they were most united in loving care and thought for each other. A large sleigh full of little girls drove by. They were Hetty's friends, and how Rob would have rejoiced in seeing her face among them; but it was inside the room in which she had been a prisoner so long, probably still looking from the window from which she had waved them a farewell.

Then before him arose the day on which the dear face had lain on a pillow, and no one knew whether it would ever be lifted to to gladden those who loved it.

Rob skated up to his brother.

"Say," he said, "do you believe mother'd let us bring Hetty down here? We'd scoot her down in no time at all."