

"'Cept sayin' 'Don't!' lotsh of timesh," marked Toddie.

"Well," said Budge, "Tod thought 'bout *that*, but we made up our minds perhaps we needed that said to us. An' we couldn't think of anything nicer than to get you some wild flowers, *ev'ry* body's got *tame* flowers, you know, so we thought wild ones would be nicer. An' we thought we could get 'em 'fore breakfas' if we'd hurry up: so off we came right up to the foot of the mountain, but there wasn't any—I guess they wasn't awake yet, or else they'd gone to sleep. Then we didn't know *what* to do."

"'Cept get you some bych (birch) bark," said Toddie.

"Yes," said Budge, "but birch bark is to eat an' not to look at, an' we wanted to give you somethin' you could see, an' remember us a few days by."

"An' all of a sudden I said 'fynes!'" (ferns) said Toddie.

"Yes," said Budge, "Tod said it first, but I thought it the same second, an' there's sech *love-ly* ferns up in the rocks—don't you see?"

Mrs. Burton looked and shuddered; the cliff above her head was a hundred feet high, jagged all over its front, yet from each crevice exquisite ferns posed their graceful fronds before the cold gray of the rock.

"'Twasn't here," said Budge: "'twas away up around the corner where the rocks ain't so high, but they're harder to climb. We climbed up here first."

"Oh, you dreadful, darling children!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, giving Budge a squeeze of extra severity. "To think of two little children going up such a dreadful place! Why, it makes me dizzy to see your Uncle Harry do it."

"Ain't childrens when we climbs mountainsh," asserted Toddie. "We'zh *mans* then."

"Well," continued Budge, "we got lots, and throwed each one away 'cause we kept seein' nicer ones higher up. Say, Aunt Alish, what's the reason things higher up always look extra nice?"

"I know," said Toddie.

"Why is it, then, Toddie?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"'Cauzh theyzh closer to hebbin," said Toddie. "G'won, Budge—I likes to hear about it, too."

"Well," said Budge, "at last we got to a place where the rocks all stopped an' some more began, an' upon them was the loveliest ferns of all."

"An' I went up that mountain fyst I did," said Toddie.

"Yes, Tod *did*, the blessed little sassy rascal," said Budge, blowing a kiss to his brother. "I told him I didn't believe that any ferns was nicer than any others, but he said, 'Lord'll make some, so then for Aunt Alish.' And up he went, jus' like a spider."

"Went up *fyst*," said Toddie.

"Course you did," said Budge, "'cause I didn't go up at all. And Tod was pullin' at a big fern with his back to me, an the first thing I

knew there he was in air layin' down sideways on nothin'. Then he hollered."

"'Cauzh I comed down bunk on whole lotsh of little wocks," explained Toddie. "But I didn't lose the fyne—here 'tish!" And Toddie held up a badly crushed and wilted ball of something that had once been a fern, seeing which Mrs. Burton sat Budge upon the stone, hurried to Toddie, thrust the bruised fern into her bosom, and kissed its captor soundly.

"Hold me some more," said Budge. "I don't feel very good yet."

"Then what did you do?" asked Mrs. Burton, resuming her positoin as nurse.

"Why, Tod went on hollerin', an' he couldn't walk, so I helped him down to the road, an' he couldn't walk yet—"

Mrs. Burton hastened again to Toddie and carefully examined his legs without finding any broken bones.

"The hurt is in the bottom part of my leg an' the top part of my foot," said Toddie, who had sprained his ankle.

"An' he just hollered 'mam-ma' an' 'pa-pa' so sad," continued Budge. "An' 'twas awful. An' I looked up the road, an' there wasn't anybody, an' down the road, an' there wasn't anybody, an' down the front of the mountain, an' there wasn't anybody, an' I didn't know what to do, 'cause it wouldn't do to go way off home to tell, when a poor little brother was feelin' so dreadful bad. Then I remembered how papa said he'd some time seen shot soldiers carried away when there wasn't any wagons. So I pulled at the limb of a tree to get the thing to drag him on."

"Why, Budge!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, "You don't mean to say you got that bough all alone by yourself, do you?"

"Well, no—I guess not," said Budge, hesitatingly. "I pulled at one after another, but not one of them would split, and then I thought of somethin', and kneeled right down by the tree an' told the Lord all about it, an' told Him I knew He didn't want poor little hurt Tod to lie there all day, an' wouldn't He *please* help me break a limb to draw him on. An' when I got up off my knees I was as strong as forty thousand horses. I don't think I needed the Lord to help me a bit then. An' I just gave one pull at the limb, and down it came kersplit, an' I put Tod on it, and dragged him. But I tell you it was hard!"

"'Twash fun, too," said Toddie, "'cept when it went where there was little rocks in the road, an' they came up an' hitted the hurt playshe."

"I dragged it in the soft parts of the road," said Budge, "whenever I could, but sometimes there wasn't any soft place all across the road. An' things jumped inside of me—that little heart-engine, you know—*awful*. I could only go about a dozen steps without stoppin' to rest, an' then Tod stopped cryin' an' said he was hungry, an' that reminded me that I was hungry, too."

"But we didn't lose the fyne," said Toddie.

Mrs. Burton took the memento from her breast and kissed it.