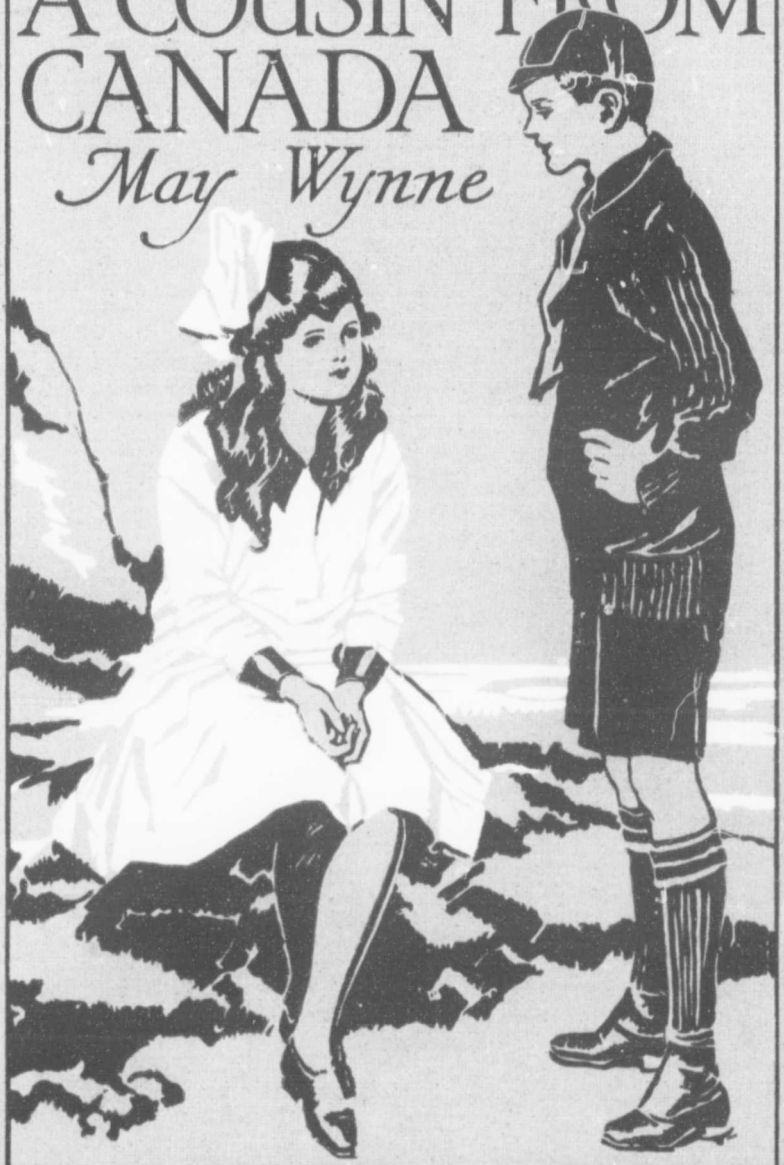
A COUSIN FROM CANADA

May Wynne



A Cousin from Canada

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IT CERTAINLY WAS ROSEBELL

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A
Cousin from Canada

A Story for Children

BY

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"When Auntie Lil took Charge" &c.

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CHAPTER I

The Coming of Jack

"Snap!" cried Geoff.

"What a shame!" sighed Rosebell. "You've got all my cards."

"I believe I heard carriage wheels," said Helen, peeping out behind the blinds, "but it's too dark to see."

"Dad's in his surgery," replied Geoff, jumping up too. "There's a ring at the front-door bell. I expect it's only a patient who didn't know where to find the surgery door."

Dr. Orsdale's practice was in the country, and his house stood just on the outskirts of

a small market town, such a nice, rambling old house, with a regular wilderness of a garden full of delights to the children.

There were three of them. Helen, aged thirteen—pretty, rather demure Helen, who felt the responsibility of being the eldest, now Mother was away for six whole months in Switzerland, where Dad hoped she would lose her cough and come back quite strong and well. Geoff was the second, aged twelve, a sturdy, fair-haired lad, a good deal keener on games and play than lessons, with a fixed determination to be a hero when he grew up, a determination in which his faithful little chum, Rosebell, agreed so long as he did not get killed in performing heroic actions. Rosebell was eleven, and her name really suited her, with her mop of short fair curls, her rosy cheeks, and blue eyes. It was her one grief that she had not been born a boy.

"Voices," whispered Geoff, as sounds were heard in the passage. "Men. I expect it's an accident."

"There's Dad speaking," replied Helen. "It's sure only to be patients, let's go on with the game. Come back, Rosebell, you are a Miss Curiosity."

"I only opened the door a teeniest bit," said Rosebell, coming back to the table. "It's a man and a boy; the man has the funniest voice, ever so funny, I couldn't understand a word he said."

"You deal, Helen," said Geoff, "I won the game before. Let's have animal grab for a change. I'll be a pig. I love grunting."

"I'll be a cock," laughed Rosebell. "And, Helen, do be a cat, because you mew so nicely."

Animal grab soon put the thought of the patients who had come to the wrong door out of their minds, and Geoff was making the most realistic grunt when the door opened and Dad came in.

They jumped up at once, and pulled him down into the one cosy chair the room contained. It was Mother's chair really,

but Mother was away, and *she* had told them to look after Dad for her.

"Have all the patients gone?" asked Helen. "We heard the ones who came to the wrong door."

"Ah!" said Dad. "Yes, you must have heard them, but they were not patients at all."

"One," said Rosebell, cuddling close to Dad, "was a man whose voice went boom-boom, squeak-squeak in the funniest way, and the other was a boy."

"Yes," replied Dad, "the other was a boy. His name is Jack Wymond."

"And why?" asked Geoff, who was kneeling on the hearth scratching the ear of his beloved Jiggles—a mongrel Irish terrier. "Why did he come here if he's not ill?"

"He came," replied Dad, "because he has no one in the world belonging to him. His father died two months ago; he was a second cousin of mine, and we were friends as boys. Ralph Wymond has

been living in the wilds of Canada for years—many, many years. When he died he had no one to whom to leave his little son, so he sent him to me."

The children were so astonished that they could not even ask questions at first. Then Geoff asked:

"Is he coming to *live* here?"

Dr. Orsdale looked very grave as he glanced at the three eager young faces.

"Yes," he replied, "he is coming to live here—if you will help me. That is what I came to ask you before deciding."

"Oh," said Helen, "how *can* we help?"

"That is what I am going to tell you, dear. Jack Wymond is just Geoff's age, but from what I can gather from half an hour's talk with the man who brought him, he has lived for at least the last three years in the wilds of Canada, where his father took him on his prospecting expeditions in search of gold. Jack's mother died when he was nine years old, since then he has lived in mining camps amongst

all sorts of rough people and Indians. You will understand how difficult it will be for him to come and settle down in a quiet English home, and I feel I could not undertake the responsibility, especially in your mother's absence, unless you can give me your promise of help. I mean—to help Jack to settle down, and get rid of old bad habits, to be very kind and patient with him, and to show him what it means to be an honourable and courteous English gentleman. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father," said Helen. "You want us to take care of Jack and help him to be a good boy."

The doctor's smile was very faint. "Yes, dear," he said. "At least, I want you all to do your best, not only for my sake, but for Jack's own; and also for a yet higher reason, the best reason of all: to make it work for God."

"Yes, Father," chorused the children, and Geoff scrambled to his feet. "We'll promise, Dad," he said; "it's a sort of

job, isn't it? A job which you're giving us three. I believe it will be quite nice."

"Nanna has taken him upstairs; he was too tired to want anything but bed. I said that I was sure you would like to take his supper up to him."

"Rather!" cried Geoff. "Which is to be his room? He can share mine if he likes. What fun! He'll be a sort of Cousin from Canada."

And off he flew, nearly knocking over Ann, who was carrying a tray. Geoff seized the latter without ceremony. "Dad said I could take him his supper," he called back to the flustered Ann, who stood shaking her head indignantly up at him.

"And you'll have all the milk over the cloth, Master Geoff," cried the poor woman, "if not the stair-carpet. Dear heart alive! as if we hadn't children enough in the house already."

Geoff went more carefully as he saw how the milk really had slopped over into the plate—how silly of Ann to fill the glass so

full!—and here came old Nanna, looking almost as vexed as Ann herself.

"Now don't you stay talking, Master Geoff," she said; "the lad's wearied out. Dear, dear! One can't help pitying the poor lamb. But never did I see clothes in such a state of grime before; just fit to be burned, and no more. I'm sure I'd be ashamed to send them to the laundry, and I make no doubt he was just as grubby himself before his bath. Yes, he's in the chintz room, and you're not to keep him from his sleep after he's had his bit of supper."

Geoff did not heed half of this talk. He was very carefully carrying the tray across the landing towards a door left ajar. There was a light burning within, and as Geoff entered he saw a boy sitting up in bed, staring eagerly towards him.

Such a handsome boy, dark-eyed, sunburnt, with close-cropped dark curls, and a look of anxious curiosity on his face as he turned to survey Geoff.

The latter flushed.

"I've brought your supper," he said shyly. "I'm sorry I slopped the milk; I came too fast. I hope you don't mind."

The boy laughed.

"Not a straw," he replied. "I'm used to everything. How queer this is! I'm glad there's a boy of my own age. I heard what the old woman said about my clothes. I suppose you're shocked. Everyone gets that way in England. Silas said so. I'd better have stayed in the camp."

He was over-tired, and his lips quivered.

"I'm glad you've come," said Geoff. "And it's lucky I have two weeks' holiday. Scarlet fever broke out in my day-school."

Jack did not reply at once. He was eating hungrily.

Presently there came a scuffle outside, and Jiggles, who had missed his master, bounced in.

"For shame, Jiggles!" said Geoff. "Clear out."

For Jiggles, scenting supper, had leapt on to the bed, and thrust an enquiring nose close to a plate of pudding.

Jack, who a moment before had seemed on the brink of tears, brightened.

"I love dogs," he said. "Don't send him away. He can have the pudding. Jiggles? Is that your name? Jiggles!"

Jiggles ate the pudding first—against every rule of the house—and made friends afterwards.

Geoff sat at the foot of the bed, and wished he could find it as easy to chum as the dog. Jack rather puzzled him. He seemed somehow like a forest creature placed in a cage, who cannot get at home in new quarters.

But he made a great fuss of Jiggles.

"We'll have lots of fun to-morrow," said Geoff encouragingly. "It will be jolly having a boy to play with. I only have two sisters, Helen and Rosebell. Rosebell is quite good at cricket."

"What's cricket?" asked Jack, and

Geoff fairly gasped. Was it possible a boy of twelve years old did not even *know* what cricket was?

"It's a game," he stammered. "Don't you play it in Canada?"

Jack laughed. "We don't play much at anything," he said. "At least I don't. The men used to play cards—gamble, you know—but Dad wouldn't let me, and I didn't want to. I like sport—shooting, riding, fishing, anything in that way. Do you?"

It was Geoff's turn to shake his head now.

"There is fishing," he said, "in the river, but it's private; and sometimes Rosebell and I go up to the miller's pond. We *have* caught eels there."

The stranger stared, wrinkling his brows, then he sighed.

"England is a queer place," he murmured. "And—and I wish I'd made Silas take me back to the camp—to Jake—and Red Axe—and Tom Thumb—and all the boys."

His head slipped back on to the pillow. He half turned, with a little grunt, and was asleep before Geoff had closed the door behind him.

I believe when the Orsdale children awoke next morning they could hardly convince themselves that the coming of Jack was not a dream.

"Won't it be funny, Helen," called Rosebell from her bed, "having two boys to play with? Poor Jack! I am so sorry for him having no dad, or mother, or anyone, though he's our cousin because Dad and his Dad were cousins. I'm ever so pleased Dad has given him to us to take care of."

"It won't be easy," replied Helen. "I believe Dad knows that, for he looked so grave. If Jack is very naughty he won't be able to stay here. We've got to try and influence him."

"If we love him very much," said Rosebell, "he'll like to be good—at least he'll like to be like us. I'm afraid Geoff and I aren't very good ourselves. Nanna says

we're pickles. Of course you are different, you dear old Helen! I wish I was like you. Now—one, two, three, and away! I'm going to get out of bed." And the little girl took a flying leap, bringing blankets and sheets on to the floor.

The next moment she was giving a squeal of delight.

"Snow! Snow! Get up and look, Helen. Everything's like fairyland. Oh, *do* look at the trees! They are lovely, like, oh, I don't know what! But what fun we shall have, and Jack will love snowballing, too."

They were soon dressed, and racing hand in hand down to the dining-room. Breakfast was the only meal at which the children saw their father. Helen and Rosebell found him to-day standing by the fire, talking to Jack and Geoff.

Jack was quite rested this morning, and dressed in Geoff's clothes looked very nice. He was taller and slighter than Geoff, but the blue jersey and knickers fitted fairly well.

Dr. Orsdale kissed his little daughters kindly.

"Ah!" said he, "here comes the tea, and you all ought to be as hungry as hunters this cold morning. You will have a busy day, eh, chicks, showing Jack everything?"

"We can toboggan," said Jack, looking at Geoff. "Have you one?"

Alas! Geoff had not! "We go down the hill on tea-trays," he replied. "It is fun!"

"Lovely fun!" cried Rosebell, dimpling. "I go round and round like a tee-to-tum, and we laugh so much we can hardly climb the hill again."

Jack laughed too. The sense of loneliness, so big and horrible last night, had vanished. He liked this cosy room, he liked hot sausages and strawberry jam, he liked Geoff, and thought Rosebell a jolly kid, whilst already he loved Jiggles. Dr. Orsdale and Helen did not so much concern him.

Helen poured out, and after breakfast busied herself with small household tasks

which had been undertaken in Mother's absence. Helen liked to feel her position as the "eldest", who in a way must try and take Mother's place as much as she could.

Nanna always called Helen a model child, and I am afraid Helen felt herself a little bit too much of a model, too.

Geoff and Rosebell took possession of Jack as soon as they received permission to go out.

"You'd better have some football stockings over those," said Geoff, "and this woollen cap. What shall we do first? I'm afraid there's only one tea-tray. Shall we snowball?"

"All right!" replied Jack; "but we've got to make a toboggan some old time. Is Rosebell coming? Girls are rather in the way, ain't they?"

"S-h!" whispered Geoff, as his little sister came dancing downstairs in her "teddy-bear" coat and cap. "Belle is as good as a boy any day. Come on, Rosebell, we're going to snowball."

How nice and crisp the snow felt under their feet! Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch; and what snowballs they made! Tom, the garden boy, came to join when old Martin's back was turned, and Jiggles raced and barked round and round the snowballers like a mad thing.

Jack proved not only a very straight shooter, but a regular eel in dodging the big white balls. They simply could not hit him, though presently the other three were all chasing him together, whilst clever Jack, dodging down behind an old tree-stump, aimed back as quick as lightning, one hitting Tom full in his mouth, which he had just opened wide to shout "Catch 'im!"

It was Tom who was caught, and oh! how he did splutter and spit out the nasty wet snow. Jack laughed so that he did not notice Rosebell creep close to his shelter and aim a snowball down his neck.

Altogether it was a great battle, and how delicious the hot cocoa tasted which

WHAT SNOWBALLS THEY MADE!

kind Helen brought out to them in a jug! Helen was wrapped up too, and I believe she was sorry to be late for the snow-balling.

"Shall we make a snow man?" she suggested, and they were soon hard at work. Geoff said he voted they should each make a man; and, as Tom had gone back to his path-brushing, the four children each chose his or her own site for their "man"; but Rosebell soon found her monster ball too heavy to roll, and as she paused, panting, gave a little cry of surprise.

"Oh, look at Jack!" she exclaimed; "that's not how to make a snow man. He's got a spade."

CHAPTER II

Tobogganing

Not only had Jack got a spade, but he seemed to know how to use it. He was shovelling away at a great rate, and the other children soon saw that he was not attempting to make a "man".

"Is it a snow house?" asked Geoff eagerly.

Jack nodded.

"It's going to be," he replied. "You should have seen the one we made out way by White Bear Lake. That was some house! But we ought to be able to make quite a snug hut if the frost holds and there is more snow."

"May we help?" asked Helen. Somehow she had forgotten how grown up she ought to be.

"Come on!" said Jack; "only take care to flatten the snow each time, to make the wall hard and keep it thick. You'll all want spades."

But if they wanted them they could not get them.

Martin said he had no more spades to spare, though Geoff was sure there was another in the tool-shed; so Jack stuck to the spade, and the others brought supplies of snow for him to flatten down. Geoff took turns to be "flattener", but he did not do it nearly so well. He had already come to the conclusion that if Jack did not know what cricket and football meant, he was very clever at lots of things.

The making of the snow house went on briskly till dinner-time; but alas! the plans made to finish the walls during the afternoon were quashed by Nanna.

"No more being out in that messy snow to-day, my dears," she declared, as she helped them to suet-pudding and treacle. "You've all been soaked through once,

and there's to be no more of it till to-morrow."

Geoff looked glum.

"We can't do it to-morrow morning," he grumbled, "because Dad said this morning Mr. Baines, the curate, was coming in from ten to twelve to give Jack and me lessons till school reopens."

But Nanna was firm, and the children ate their pudding, all feeling rather ill-used.

As soon, however, as they were back in the schoolroom Jack laughed.

"You're not going to take any notice of what that old girl said?" he asked. "I wish we had her at the Camp. Tom Thumb would get her going."

"Oh!" said Helen, rather shocked, "but we must obey Nanna; besides, our things did get awfully wet."

"I wonder," put in Rosebell hastily, as she saw Jack frown, "if we could make a toboggan? There's lots of wood in the barn, and if we coax Martin he'll let us have tools."

"Ripping!" cried Geoff. "Jack can show us how to do it."

And Jack agreed, though he muttered something about "not sticking that old woman's sauce".

Rosebell was sent to coax Martin, with whom she was a special favourite, and presently she and Tom appeared at the barn door laden with what was wanted.

Tom would have liked to stay, but he had strict orders to go back to work, and only paused to tell what a "wigging" he had received for wasting his time snow-balling.

"You wait till the snow-house is finished," said Geoff. "We'll have a siege then."

Jack was quite intent on his toboggan-making. Of course, he had not the proper sort of wood, and the "runners" were only clumsily sawn, but they all agreed it was rather a wonderful sort of toboggan under the circumstances; and, when at last it was finished, there was strong temptation just to go once and see how it worked.

"The old girl said we were not to make a snow house," argued Jack. "Tobogganing is different."

Helen shook her head.

"We should get just as wet," she replied.

"If only we could see once," sighed Geoff.

"It's getting dark," urged Rosebell, "and it must be nearly tea-time. Let's wait till to-morrow."

"Come on in then," said Jack, rather to the other's surprise, for they had expected him to insist.

Helen presided over the tea-table, and to-day she was kept busy; everyone was thirstier than they had ever been in their lives before. Geoff asked for the slop-basin to drink his tea out of, and Jack said he should like his in a pail.

Both Geoff and Rosebell were very eager for Jack to tell them about Canada and the wilds of Temagani, where he had gone with his father for the gold-prospecting,

but Jack only flushed and shook his head.

"I'd rather not to-day," he said; "perhaps another time." And he bit his lip.

Helen saw his trouble, and changed the conversation to plans for the next day. It did seem a pity about lessons, but Helen and Rosebell had their governess coming to-morrow too, so there would not have been much chance of getting on with the "house".

"We are only going to have morning lessons till Mother comes home," said Rosebell with satisfaction, "because Helen had got into the way of having headaches. I think it is rather a nice arrangement, because I do hate lessons."

"We have to do an hour's sewing with Nanna after tea," said Helen, "but that is interesting. I love needlework."

Rosebell got rather red. "I think I would too," she whispered, "if needles hadn't got such sharp points."

There was a fine game of animal grab

that night. Jack said he would be a masog, which he explained was the noisy mocking-bird of Canada; and certainly *this* masog was very noisy, and Helen's gentle mews were quite drowned by his clatter, added to by the grunts of pig-Geoff and the crowings of cock-Rosebell.

When Dr. Orsdale put his head in at the schoolroom he could not help stopping his ears against the din, but he was ever so pleased to see how happy Jack was looking, and how completely at home he seemed amongst his new friends.

But alas! I am afraid it was rather too early to give Jack a good character. Geoff was sleeping soundly that night with his head nearly buried in the bed-clothes, when ugh! the latter were suddenly stripped off him, and, when he sat up, shivering and indignant to see who had played the trick, there stood Jack, in his dark-blue jersey and knickers, close to his bed.

"Sh!" said Jack. "Get up quick! It's a ripping moonlight night and freezing

hard. We'll have some fine tobogganing."

"Tobogganing?" echoed Geoff, but his eyes began to dance, and he got out of bed.

"Hurry!" urged Jack. "It will be sport —and that old squaw will be snoring much too loudly to hear us. It'll be some game!"

"You shouldn't call Nanna names," urged Geoff, who was trying to "not think" of the naughtiness of this adventure. "She's ever so nice really, only she doesn't understand about boys. *We* shan't catch cold."

"Ready?" asked Jack. "You lead the way. We'll put on our boots outside. Some sport! How I wish Tom Thumb were here!"

There could be no talking as they crept off downstairs and out through the schoolroom window. It was piercingly cold, and Geoff's teeth were chattering, half in excitement, half cold. Never had he

dreamed of such an exploit, though Jack took it quite calmly. Geoff supposed Jack himself had had so many real adventures that a moonlight tobogganing hardly counted. He hoped one day Jack would tell him all about Tom Thumb, Red Axe, and the camp in the wilds. At present it was thrilling enough to be carrying that wonderful toboggan over the crisp, frozen snow towards the edge of the hill.

What *fun*!

Geoff had had no idea it would be anything like this, and it simply took his breath away. It was no more like sliding downhill on a tea-tray than a rocking-horse is like a ride on a real pony.

The toboggan just rushed to the bottom of the hill in a twink, and Geoff clung on, feeling that something awful was going to happen, and he was quite powerless to stop it.

But all that happened was the stopping of the toboggan half-way across the meadow at the bottom of the hill. It stopped with

such a jerk, against a frozen mound, that both boys were flung out. Geoff was quite dazed when he picked himself up.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Jack was shaking himself free of snow.

"That wasn't bad," he said; "the old toboggan came along fine."

"Sp—spiffing," said Geoff. "What *will* the girls say? It just makes you buzz."

That was exactly what he had felt, and he could hardly believe they had come such a distance. But, if they came "all in a twink", it took a great many twinks to get up that hill again. It was so horribly slippery, and where the snow lay deep it quite cut on the frozen surface as the boys' weight broke the thin crust. But they were enthusiastic; the moonlight, the invigorating cold, the thought of that terrific, breath-taking rush, the knowledge that this was a forbidden adventure, all made them eager to "go again".

They *did* go again—they went many times—and always when they reached the

top of the hill was the longing for just one more.

"This really must be the last," said Geoff, "or we shan't have any bed at all. I shouldn't wonder if we got to the hedge."

But they did *not* get to the hedge; they did not even reach the bottom of the hill; for the toboggan, swerving, went bouncing over a mole-hill, and tipped both boys out with some violence.

Geoffrey fell on his face, and lay at first half stunned. Jack came and stooped over him.

"Hurt?" he asked.

Geoff slowly raised himself, and Jack whistled.

"Whew! you've cut your forehead badly. Does it hurt?"

"I don't feel it," said Geoff dully, putting his hand to his head, and uttering a little cry of dismay at sight of the blood on it.

Blood *looks* so alarming—and is so alarm-

ing too. Geoff thought his injury must be serious.

"Oh!" he gasped, "it's blood."

Jack had had more experience.

"It won't bleed fast in this cold," he said. "And it's not so awfully bad; but I guess there'll be ructions. What a pity! Can you come along, or shall I have to get help?"

This cheery way of taking the "awful bleeding" encouraged Geoff. It might not be so serious after all, and, of course, he could not let Jack think he was a coward. He staggered to his feet.

"I—I can walk," he said; "b—but—the toboggan——"

"I can fetch that presently. It *was* the last run, eh? That's good. I'll have to call the old sq——I mean Nanna, to tie up your head."

Geoff felt too faint to care what Jack did by the time he reached the house, and it was quite beyond his strength to crawl through the schoolroom window. Jack

vaulted in, leaving Geoff leaning against the wall, and presently the garden door was opened and Dr. Orsdale came out. The doctor had been called to see a patient, and happened to be in the hall when Jack, covered with frozen particles of snow, appeared.

It was not a time to scold or ask questions. Geoff was carried in by his father and laid on the schoolroom sofa, where he lay, feeling ever so funny, with a curious sensation of drifting away—away—away—across a great sea; though he heard voices round him, and knew Nanna and Daddie were talking, that someone was bathing and bandaging his head, and that presently he had to drink something which burned and nearly choked him. He didn't like being choked, and tried to sit up to explain this; for the drifting feeling had gone, and he could see both Jack and Nannie over there by the table, on which a lamp had been set, and knew that it was Dad who had given him the brandy.

"It's all right, my boy," said Dad, "lie still. I am going to carry you up to bed presently."

"It was the tobogganing——" Geoff tried to say; but his voice only wobbled, and he was content to do what Dad told him, and lie still till presently—he didn't *quite* know how—he found himself all cosy in bed, ready to snuggle down and go to sleep.

It was Rosebell who brought Geoff his breakfast next morning. Rosebell, very grave and solemn, who looked at her brother as if she feared he might melt away under her gaze.

"*Poor* Geoff," she said, and big tears welled in her blue eyes as she set down the tray.

"You needn't say 'poor' like that," retorted Geoff, rather crossly. His head ached this morning, and he felt as stiff as a poker—in fact he felt a very much injured little boy, who had quite a right to his bad temper.

Rosebell put two lumps of sugar into his tea.

"Does it hurt awful?" she asked. "You look like a wounded soldier with your head tied up. Nanna said she—she thought you were killed last night—and it was all Jack's fault. I *wish* he'd never come."

And she bit her lip to keep back the sob.

"Nanna's a silly," said Geoff. "Of course, I wasn't killed—and it was not Jack's fault. We had ripping sport till the toboggan turned over, no one could help that."

"Nanna's furious with Jack," retorted Rosebell. "She says Dad will send him away, and that he's only fit to live with Red Indians and wild men. Jack's miserable. Helen says he really *was* to blame, but I can't help being sorry. I told him so—and he ran away into the garden. I believe he went to cry."

"It's a shame," said Geoff, pushing away his tray. "I don't want any messy old egg, or breakfast. I want Jack. It

was my naughtiness as much as his, and I'll tell Nanna so."

He began to cry over it all—and Geoff never cried as a rule, he said it was babyish; so Rosebell, suddenly remembering that she had been told not to stay and talk, ran off in a fright to call Nanna.

Daddie had had to go out early to his "bad patient", and so Nanna was the only one to come to the rescue. I am afraid at first she was not very successful in preventing Geoff exciting himself, for she only scolded, and the scolding made the tears come faster. Nanna was at her wits' end, ready now to promise and coax, do anything, indeed, to calm the overwrought boy, who sobbed on uncontrollably. It was Rosebell who hit on the right plan to stop him, for she heard Geoff repeating through his tears that it was *not* Jack's fault.

It was *Jack* Geoff was worrying about. Jack must be fetched. The place seemed so topsy-turvy this morning that no one

noticed Rosebell flying down the snowy garden path, bare-headed, and with only thin slippers on. Helen would never have been so careless, but Rosebell thought only of poor Geoff crying on uncomforted. She found Jack, as she had guessed, in the barn. He had brought up the toboggan, and was nailing on a new runner. He looked up defiantly at Rosebell.

"What do you want, anyway?" he asked.

Rosebell did not even think of being shocked.

"Oh, Jack," she panted, "Geoff's crying so for you! And if he goes on crying about it not being your fault, his head will bleed again, and he'll be ever so bad. Do come quick."

And she caught Jack by the arm, looking pleadingly into his scowling face through a mist of tears.

Already the scowl was beginning to fade.

"Everyone was yelling at me," the boy muttered. "First the doctor, then the old woman, and Helen—they all seemed to

think I'd been trying to kill Geoff for a lark. I—I——"

"Oh, never mind about *you*," cried Rosebell, "think of Geoff; we know it was not exactly at all your fault, and he is crying so."

That last appeal was too much for Jack. All the angry defiance which had made him refuse to show penitence for wrong-doing melted away, and he got slowly to his feet.

"I'll come and see Geoff," he said. "And I don't care a snap what those others say, for—for I *am* sorry he's hurt—of course I am."

"*I* knew you were," replied Rosebell.

CHAPTER III

Jack finds a Job

Geoff's cut head took longer to get well than he had supposed.

Jack's coming had stopped his tears that first day, but the excitement had done him a lot of harm, and Dr. Orsdale ordered complete quiet for a week.

Complete quiet meant lying in semi-darkness, with either Jack or Rosebell—*always* Jiggles!—beside him.

Nanna had at first tried to keep Jack away. Indeed, she had had a "good talk" to the doctor about that tiresome boy. The children did not know for certain what Nanna had said, but both Helen and Rosebell felt pretty sure that she had tried to persuade their father to send Jack away.

If so, Nanna had not succeeded; for Jack not only remained at Fairleigh House, but was allowed to go and sit with Geoff as long as he liked.

"Dad talked to Jack," Rosebell told Helen; "and when Jack came out he looked as if he'd been crying ever such a lot. But he ran away when he saw me."

Of course, no one thought any more about tobogganing; indeed, the poor toboggan was soon made into firewood. But the snow held, and when Geoff was allowed to sit up for a few hours a day in his room, one of his first questions was about the snow house.

"Have you finished it?" he asked Jack.

Jack shook his head.

"We've not been out in the garden at all," he replied; "only for walks along the road."

He gave a tremendous sigh. It *had* been so difficult to poor Jack to be kept within such strict bounds, after the wild

life of the camp. But that talk with Dr. Orsdale had had a great effect on the boy. He had been made to realize what his father—so passionately loved—would wish him to do. The doctor had read part of that father's letter in which the latter had asked his old friend to take care of his boy. No wonder Jack had run off afterwards to indulge in a good cry in the barn. But, at the same time, he had made a resolve. For Dad's sake he must "stick it" here, in this dull English household, and try not to give trouble.

He was sorry about Geoff, and had been eager to sit with him whenever it was allowed; he spoke regretfully now about the snow house.

"Oh!" said Geoff, "it is a pity, and there is such a lot of snow! I could sit here at the window and watch you build."

"I don't think we'd be allowed to," sighed Jack. "Nanna says she'll have no more snow games after your accident."

But Dr. Orsdale was less severe than

old Nanna, and when Geoff spoke to him about the snow house he gave leave at once.

"Of course," he replied. "Out you go, Master Jack, and I've no doubt Helen and Rosebell will want to help you. I remember when I was a boy we made a fine snow house which remained unmelted for weeks after the snow had gone."

Jack went off in a twinkling, and I am afraid his descent of the stairs must have been by the banisters, since a second later they could hear him shouting from the hall to tell Rosebell the good news.

Helen was dressing a doll and would not come, but Jack and Rosebell were soon busy shovelling away the snow in fine style.

Geoff could not help feeling sad at only being a watcher, but he was not the boy to grizzle over spilt milk, and was soon eagerly intent on the growth of the famous hut. And famous it soon became! Jack had had a great deal of practice in this sort

of thing, and when the roof was firmly on the hut looked splendid.

"It's as warm as anything inside," Rosebell told her brother, when she and Jack came up to sit with him after tea. "And Jack is going to cut shelves in the wall, and we are going to have two stools, and an old wine-case for a table. It's ripping; even Dad says it is clever, and much the best he has ever seen."

"You should have seen the one the Indians made up in Temagnani," said Jack; "that *was* something to talk about."

Geoff looked up eagerly. "Do tell us——" he began, then hesitated.

Jack was busy making a whistle out of a piece of wood. "About the camp?" he asked, "or the Indians?"

"*Anything*," cried Geoff and Rosebell in a breath, "if you really don't mind."

Jack was intent on his work.

"Red Axe was a ripper," he said, "one of the Algonquins. Most of the Red Indians are a bit degenerate now, but Red

Axe was a great big chap, and he could do anything—shoot, swim, race, paddle, dance, sing. You would love to see a scalp dance, Geoff."

"A scalp dance," whispered Rosebell. "Oh! how horrid!"

The boys laughed. "They don't really do any scalping," said Jack. "They just make a big fire, and dance round it, acting, you know, all the time, *pretending* they are scalping imaginary enemies. They call it a 'pow-wow'."

"Did you ever have an adventure out there," asked the little girl, "with wild animals?"

"We all had lots of adventures," said Jack; "there were all the boys, you see. I mean the men of the camp. We did not stay there all the time. Dad was prospecting for gold—only he never found any; at least he never *got* any, though I believe he ought to have, if a man named Jake Harrell hadn't cheated him. I wasn't away with him that time; I stayed in camp,

and it was then I had my biggest adventure."

"Tell us about it—*do!*" entreated his listeners.

Jack put his whistle in his pocket and curled round on his seat.

"I was just sick," he said, "at being left behind. It got my dander up to be treated like a kid, so when the boys were out I just gave old Dinah—the negress who cooked and 'did' for us all—the slip, and, taking my rifle, I went off into the forest—strictly against orders! To begin with, I had a dandy time. I shot two birds, and was wondering if I should get near a deer, when I caught my foot in a root and toppled over; the rifle was flung into a thorn bush, and just as I was picking myself up I heard a growl, and there, not forty yards off, was a black bear. I went cold, you bet! for I could see my rifle sticking up out of the bush, too far off for me to be able to reach and point it before the bear would be upon me. Something

had put Bruin into a very bad temper, and he growled again as he came forward, rising to his hind legs as he got near. I couldn't move, I was just paralysed with fright, and the old bear came nearer—nearer—nearer. I shut my eyes and said a prayer that hadn't any proper words to it. I expected in another second to feel those horrible arms round me hugging my life out of my body, when—ping!—and Bruin gave a queer sort of roar, and toppled over almost on top of me. It was Red Axe, the Indian, who had shot the brute through the eye—just in time to save my life."

"Oh!" said Geoff and Rosebell, and they sat looking in awed admiration at Jack. It seemed quite wonderful that this new playmate of theirs should have had adventures of this sort.

"It's like a book," whispered Geoff; "fancy being nearly hugged by a real bear!" He looked quite jealous.

"Jack is a sort of hero," added Rosebell;

"just the same as Martin Rattler or—or Midshipman Easy. Do tell us *more* stories, dear Jack!"

But Helen came in at this moment to say Lucy was bringing tea for them all to Geoff's room, and somehow the younger ones knew Jack would not like to talk of his adventures before Helen.

I am sure Geoff was very delighted when he was pronounced "quite well" again, even though it meant lessons. Geoff hated lessons, so did Jack; that poor Jack! You see he had not had any book-learning for three years, and he was far behind backward Geoff. Mr. Baines, their tutor, was horrified to discover what a dunce he had to teach, but perhaps Geoff was the teeniest bit pleased. He had begun to feel so very inferior to Jack, who was so clever in a host of sporting accomplishments, that it was really nice to be superior in sums, history, geography, and Latin. Jack knew no Latin at all, and shocked poor Mr. Baines by declaring that he knew Red

Indian instead, which he thought would be more useful when he was a prospector.

Mr. Baines was a pale, mild young man who wore spectacles and had a trick of repeating the word "attention" a great many times when he found his pupils' eyes wandering towards the window. He had to say "attention" very, very often to Jack, but it had no effect.

"My dear boy," he said one day in despair, "if you go on like this you will grow up a dunce; does not *that* urge you to make an effort?"

Jack rubbed the back of his curly head. "Can I still be a prospector if I am a dunce?" he asked; and when Mr. Baines said "Certainly not," he sighed resignedly. "Then I shall have to be a trapper," he said, and wondered why Geoff exploded with laughter and Mr. Baines called him hopeless.

Jack did not mean to be hopeless. After Geoff's accident through his fault, and that long talk with the doctor, he had tried his

very best to be good. But it *did* seem difficult. If he were not actually given something to do, he seemed to fall into mischief as naturally as an apple falls from the tree.

He did not seem to understand rules and regulations, and old Nanna declared he gave more trouble than all the three other children put together. "Though," added the good woman, "for that matter, Miss Helen don't give no trouble at all, bless her, and the two younger ones no more than any other children. But *Master Jack*——"

Dr. Orsdale, however, did not hear much about these hourly complaints. He was very busy, and seldom saw his children except at breakfast-time. The snow had gone at last, but the weather was foggy and miserable. It really was a mercy there were lessons to keep the children amused.

"Nanna is ill to-day," announced Helen one morning, "and so is Cook. Nanna

thinks it is influenza. It is a pity Dad had to start on his rounds before he heard. I don't know what Lucy and Ann will do about the work. We shall all have to be extra good. It is lucky Geoff and I will be out to dinner to-day."

Helen and Geoff were going to spend the day with friends, as neither Mr. Baines nor Miss Firsall was coming. Geoff hated going. Leonard Broughton was, he told Jack, a regular whiney-piney, and they would have no fun at all. Jack laughed. He was shaping an arrow, sitting curled up on the window-seat. Jack seemed able to do anything with his penknife. Geoff and Rosebell were never tired of watching him, and he had promised to make Geoff a bow and arrows before the summer came. I believe the boys had some secret plan about being a pair of Robin Hoods or Red Indians, but they did not tell anyone.

When the others had gone, Rosebell came and perched herself by Jack's side.

"Poor Cook is awfully bad," she said, "and Ann has had to go to bed too. She says the influenza is sure to go through the house, so we shall have to do everything —make the beds, wash up—and cook."

She said the last word rather doubtfully, but Jack brightened at once.

"I'll do the cooking," he cried; "that's my job."

Rosebell opened her blue eyes very wide. "You?" she questioned. "But boys can't cook."

"Can't they?" retorted Jack. "You wait and see. I often used to cook for the boys at the camp. Old Dinah, the negress, taught me. She used to drink too much sometimes, and then if the meals weren't ready the boys would be furious, so she taught me."

"The boys?"

"We always called the men that. *They* were the boys. I say, Rosebell, shall we go and cook now? Lucy can't do everything, and there's the dinner to be done."

Rosebell was delighted, but rather doubtful. "Would it be naughty?" she asked. "We aren't often allowed in the kitchen."

Jack laughed. "It might be bad if I didn't really know cooking," he replied, "but I do. I'll make a pie—savoury hash pie—it's good—and dumplings too—old Dinah's currant dumplings. We always had them in camp on Sunday. It was the only way we knew the day."

"Didn't you go to church then?"

"There wasn't a church to go to. You needn't look shocked. My father didn't forget to see I said my prayers, and I wouldn't forget anyway, since Mother——" He broke off, winking back a tear. "Let's go and cook," he added.

They found Lucy in the kitchen, red as a lobster, and nearly in tears over a milk pudding which flooded the oven.

She was not sorry for the children's help.

"It's a peck of worries," she said, her rosy, kind face wrinkled into little puckers

of anxiety; "all the illness coming together, me not knowing what job to be at first, and then the dish which oughter be fire-proof breakin' up and making all this mess —leave alone the waste."

"Never mind, Lucy," said Rosebell cheerily; "Jack's a real cook, and I'm going to be his kitchen-maid. You can go and do all the other jobs, whilst we do the dinner."

If she had made that suggestion to any-one but Lucy, she would have been told to run off and not talk nonsense; but Lucy, with the vision of the spoilt rice pudding before her eyes, was, as she called it, "fair distracted".

"Cooking is one of them things I never could do," she said; "not even to biling a petato. Anyhow, I *must* go up and see to the bedmaking and dustin', so——"

"We'll do the rest," added Jack. "Only show me where the currants and flour are kept."

Rosebell could not help wishing Geoff

were here. It was so *very* important to be really cooking the dinner, and Jack went about his business in brisk style.

"It's beginning to smell ever so good," said the little girl, as she peeped into the saucepan into which Jack was tossing all sorts of things—carrots, onions, turnips, spoonfuls of bovril, cold chopped meat, and even red-currant jelly.

"We must put on the potatoes now," said Jack. "No one boiled potatoes like Dinah, and she fried them after. If there's time I'll fry some to-day."

"Let me help," pleaded Rosebell. "What fun it is! I wonder how long Cook and Ann will be ill. *Won't* Dad be pleased! Now what shall I do?"

She was soon busy washing currants for the dumplings, whilst Jack stirred his savoury stew, smiling.

This time *no* one could call him naughty.

When Lucy came down at a quarter to one, she was smiling too.

"We can smell your stew all over the

house, Master Jack," she said, "and Cook is just racking her brains as to how I come to make anything so savoury. I never squeaked a word as it was you, or there'd have been a fine how-de-do."

"Why?" asked Jack. "I don't see why I shouldn't, as I *can*."

And he certainly *could*—to judge from appearances. I don't say the kitchen was very tidy. As a matter of fact it was higgledy-piggledy, but that did not make any difference to the flavour of the savoury pie, or the lightness of the currant dumplings. As to the cooks! Rosebell burst into a peal of laughter.

"Your hair is all flour, Jack," she cried, "where you have run your fingers through it every time you mislaid something."

"There's the bell," said Lucy; "the doctor's in early. I'm glad I had the table laid. Never mind about the mess, my dears; that can soon be cleared after dinner; and what I should have done without your help I don't know."

Now, wasn't that nice of Lucy? Rosebell, who had secretly feared that so much enjoyment and "messing" must have been somehow naughty, wanted to hug her on the spot. But Lucy was too busy to be hugged. She was carrying off the stew to the dining-room, whilst Jack followed in triumph with the vegetables, and Rosebell herself brought up the procession with the plates.

Dr. Orsdale was most concerned to hear what a very sick household he had got. He ran up to see the sufferers before he sat down to dinner, greatly to the distress of the cooks, who trembled lest the stew should be spoiled.

"Nothing very serious," said the doctor to Lucy on his return. "I hope they will be well in a day or so. I hear Mrs. Bead, the charwoman, will be able to come to-morrow, and we must manage as best we can. Where is Miss Helen?"

He seemed rather vexed when he heard Helen and Geoff were out, as he did not

like the idea of their going to pay a visit when there was influenza in the house.

Jack had insisted that the name of the cook should be kept secret till after dinner.

"If he thinks we did it, he'll turn up his nose," he said. "The boys in camp were always like that if they thought Dinah had let me cook."

"A very excellent stew," said Dr. Orsdale, "and delicious dumplings. I had no idea you were such a cook, Lucy."

"No more I am, sir," confessed Lucy; "it was Master Jack as cooked the dinner."

"And *I* helped," added Rosebell, rather injured.

"They've both been as useful as can be, sir," went on Lucy. "I don't believe I'd ever have managed without them."

Nice Lucy! And not a word about the messy kitchen.

How pleased the doctor was! and how pleased the children were! It is ever so nice when being useful means having fun

oneself. Jack and Rosebell were dreadfully disappointed not to be appointed cooks-in-chief whilst the influenza lasted. It did seem a pity that Mrs. Bead should take over their job, as they were sure they would do it better. But perhaps Dr. Orsdale guessed what sort of pickle the poor kitchen would be in at the end of a week with such cooks, though he allowed that Jack should make "dampers" for tea and cook his supper to-night. He laid a kindly hand, too, on the boy's shoulder before starting once more on his rounds.

"Well done, Jack!" was all he said, but Jack's dark face shone with content as he listened to this first praise.

Helen and Geoff were quite as jealous as the others had expected, when they returned to find what famous fun Jack and Rosebell had been having.

The tale of the stew was told over again, and a plate of "dampers" produced to show Helen what *they* could do.

Helen was quite glum over it. She and

Geoff had had a dull day. Dad had told her she ought not to have gone; and, to crown all, here were Jack and Rosebell successful in the very job she most coveted to do. She was inclined to show contempt for "dampers".

"Rather indigestible," she said.

Geoff was in the middle of a third.

"They're ripping," he replied. "You won't sniff so, Helen, when you've tried one."

Helen grew very red. She had *not* sniffed, and Geoff was very rude. She marched out of the kitchen, her head held high, and tears not far off her usually serene eyes. She had failed to-day, and knew the reason was selfishness.

Rosebell ran after her sister.

"Do try my toffee, Nell," she pleaded. "You'll like it, I'm sure. And if the influenza lasts long enough, I expect you'll have to be cook on Saturday, when Mrs. Bead can't come."

Helen took the toffee, and the black

monkey somehow scrambled down from her shoulder in disgust. Rosebell's loving little face scared him, I believe, for Rosebell was one of those wise people who liked "all to be friends", and was always sorriest for the one left out in the cold.

Jack was showing Geoff how to fry potatoes, so Rosebell went off with Helen, who soon cheered up under the suggestion that they should help Lucy by laying Dad's supper-table.

"I would rather like to be a servant," confided Rosebell. "They have to do lots of nice things—but dumplings and toffee are the nicest of all. Jack *is* clever, isn't he?"

"I'm afraid the kitchen was in a great mess," said Helen primly. "I don't know what Cook would say."

Rosebell sighed. She thought Helen might have praised Jack just for once, especially as Dad and Lucy had done so. But perhaps Helen was a teeny bit too much like old Ann for that.

Ann would have said the same about the kitchen, for she always did see when people failed sooner than when they succeeded.

"Even Jiggles liked the dampers," said Geoff. "Jack is going to teach me how to cook when we are Red Indians."

"Red Indians?" asked Rosebell. "But you *can't* be that."

"Wait till the holidays," laughed Geoff, "and you'll see."

CHAPTER IV

That Little Imp Jealousy

Three at least of the children were almost sorry when the influenza was over. There is quite a lot of fun to be found in topsy-turvydom, and Geoff agreed with Rosebell, who whispered to him that when she was grown up she should never have any servants at all.

Mrs. Bead did not make such good stews as Jack, and she was even fussier than Cook about having children in the kitchen. Helen was the only one allowed on those premises, and Geoff said quite frankly that her rock-cakes were not as good as Jack's dampers.

Lessons were going on again—real hard work, Jack called it; and many, many a time did he wish there were not such things

in the world; but he did not tell himself that he wished he were back in the camp. He was beginning to "settle down", and though there were still a hundred and one things he did not like about English household life, he was really fond of Dr. Orsdale and his little friends. Geoff and he were chums—I nearly said "great chums"; but perhaps this as yet was not quite true, for the boys were still inclined to be rather jealous of each other, in what Rosebell would have said were "silly ways"; but then jealousy always is silly, isn't it? and, worse still, very wrong. I don't know of anything, indeed, that makes people more uncomfortable. Geoff wished *awfully* that he could shoot, fish, swim, ride, as Jack talked of being able to do; he wished still more "awfully" that he had lived in a lumber camp in Temagnani, and had had adventures with Indians, bears, shooting rapids, and other such thrilling experience as he and Rosebell loved to listen to; and because these vain wishes could not

be granted he was foolishly jealous, and so inclined to laugh in a superior manner when Jack told Mr. Baines that Christiana was the capital of Turkey, and that Henry the Fifth had as many wives as Bluebeard.

"Rosebell knows ten times as much history and geography as you do," he said, one day after Mr. Baines had left, and Jack sat poring over a "returned lesson".

Jack flushed. It was quite true, but he did not like the way Geoff spoke. "I don't care a snap for old history," he retorted. "What good does it do me to know that William the Conqueror came over to England in 1066? It's much more useful to be able to paddle a canoe or shoot a deer."

Geoff laughed, not very kindly.

"Everyone has to be educated," he said, "or they can't do anything properly. A gentleman must know history, and algebra, and Latin, and geography."

Jack banged his book, turning a flushed face to Geoff's mocking one.

"My father taught me a lot of other things that are more needed in making a real gentleman," he flared. "As to old lessons I hate them, and I don't care if I don't know them. I—I don't want to be a gentleman that way."

And he ran out of the room.

Geoff knew he had been unkind, and was ashamed of himself. He wanted to say so and be friends again, but that foolish little pride, we all know the feeling of, came creeping to whisper in his ear that what he had said was quite true, and that it was all Jack's fault if he were grumpy and went off in a huff.

So a little gap began to widen between the boys. Jack seemed quite cheery at tea-time, and talked to Geoff about the wooden boat they had been making to sail on the miller's pond. The evenings were light now, for spring had come, and there would be time to go and try the boat before bed-time. But though they chatted friendlily, and neither Helen nor Rosebell noticed

anything amiss, the boys themselves were quite aware of the gap which had begun to yawn between them.

They were quite nice and polite to each other, but they were not comrades—chums.

"I wish I could go to the miller's pond too," sighed Rosebell, "but there's the horrid old sewing to do. Nanna says we have to make up for lost time. There's 'bleed' all along my hem, and my finger is quite sore."

"I like sewing," said Helen, "but this evening I am going to write to Mother. Have you any messages for her?"

They had a dozen, hoping over and over again that she was better and would soon come home.

"Nanna was saying to Ann that she would be able to come home quite soon," sighed Helen, "only this place doesn't agree with her; it's damp, and there are too many trees about. It does seem a pity we can't live somewhere where Mother would be well."

"Why don't you?" asked Jack bluntly.

"Because it would cost too much," said Helen. "I knew that before. Dad could buy a practice in a much healthier place if he were rich, but he isn't; he's rather poor, because his patients don't nearly always pay their bills."

"We ought to be starting for the miller's pond whilst it is light," urged Geoff, who hated to talk about unpleasant subjects, especially about Mother not being able to come home.

The boat sailed beautifully. Geoff himself had never been able to make a boat anything like it, but he did not say so. He seemed quite pleased; only deep down in his heart he hid that nasty, miserable jealousy.

I suppose it must have been the whispers of that hateful little foe which sent him over several times that week to the Grange to see Leonard Broughton. Leonard was not nearly so amusing a chum as Jack, in fact he was a bit of a duffer; but foolish Geoff

did not find that Leonard rubbed him up the wrong way, as Jack did.

Leonard thought Geoff a regular hero—so clever at cricket and football, so clever at lessons, so clever and brave altogether. It pleased Geoff to be so admired, after finding how much more clever in lots of nice things Jack was.

Jack did not seem to miss Geoff at all; in fact he was always off by himself in these days, and did not even ask Geoff what he was going to do.

Helen was busy dressing dolls and making pincushions for a bazaar which was to be held at the Town Hall in June, and Rosebell was the one who found time hang most heavily on her hands.

Why *did* Geoff want to go and see Leonard, when he, she, and Jack had planned to have such fun as soon as the cuckoo returned to the meadows, and violets were peeping from beneath their green leaves in the woods?

"You and Jack haven't quarrelled, have

you, Geoff?" she asked her brother wistfully one day.

Geoff reddened. "What a stupid you are, Rosebell!" he retorted; "of course we haven't."

"You don't play together—and I thought we were to have had a camp in the woods."

"So we were. I forgot. But Leonard wants me to bowl to him for an hour every day, and then when school reopens after the hols. he'll be able to join in the cricket."

The school which Geoff attended was not to be reopened till after Easter, as the scarlet-fever epidemic had been a serious one.

Rosebell sighed—and tackled Jack; she was sure there must have been a quarrel, and she wanted to set it straight.

"Jack," she said, catching hold of Jack as he was slipping off one day, "where are you going? and can't I come? I want to plan about the camp in the wood."

Jack shook his head. "The camp is 'off'," he replied. "Geoff is far too busy

with cricket, and I'm not going to waste my time learning how to hit a ball about. I'm sorry."

He was sorry, for he was very fond indeed of Rosebell. She was such a loving kiddie, he thought, and always the same. Geoff had so many moods, and he called Helen "stuck-up".

Nor would he tell Rosebell where he was going.

"I'm meeting a chum," was all he said, and Rosebell puzzled over the statement without finding what it could mean.

Of course Jack very often talked to Tom, the garden boy, and she had seen him out more than once with Tom's cousin Sam. Rosebell did not like Sam, whom Ann called an idle rapscallion. Sam *was* idle; indeed, he never seemed to do any work at all, though he called himself a rat-catcher.

Rosebell went on puzzling over all these perplexities till she grew quite serious. Geoff and Jack were *not* good friends, she was sure, and who were Jack's other

friends? Where did he go every evening after tea?

"Where's Jack?" asked Dr. Orsdale one day, meeting Rosebell in the hall, as the little girl was carrying some water for her painting across to the schoolroom.

"He's gone out, Dad," she replied. "Only just now. Do you want him?"

"If you can find him. I have had a letter from some of his old friends in Canada about which I want to speak to him. If you find him, chick, send him down to the surgery."

Rosebell set down her glass of water, popped on her sailor cap and reefer, and ran off. She had seen Jack and Tom going down the lane at the bottom of the garden only a few moments since; they were only walking slowly, and talking very fast. Rosebell was a swift runner, and she soon had the boys in sight. They were just scrambling over a ditch into Squire Wendell's woods.

The woods were private, and Rosebell

knew the Squire was very particular about trespassers at this time of year, because of the pheasants. How naughty of Tom not to explain this to Jack! She ran on, rather doubtful now as to what she ought to do. Should she follow Jack into the wood? If so, she would be a trespasser too! and that would be naughty. Still, she was only going to call Jack back.

With a sigh Rosebell scrambled over the bank and stood in the shadow of the wood. She was rather frightened now. Hales the keeper was such an alarming-looking man, and—and——

"Jack!" she called; "Jack!"

No answer.

Rosebell advanced slowly down a glade. What primroses! But there were plenty of primroses in other woods where they were allowed to go, and it never occurred to Rosebell to wish to pick the Squire's "private primroses". She did not call Jack again, she felt too nervous. She knew she would run away if she spied

Hales's brown-velveteen coat in the distance; and yet she must explain things to Jack, as—as well as give Tom a good scolding. She felt really cross with Tom, who knew all about the Squire's fussiness.

Going through a wood which is strictly private is rather like playing Tom Tiddler's Ground.

Hales the keeper was the Tom Tiddler, and Rosebell was not sure that he could not put her into a real prison if he caught her.

Cr—r—r—k! It was only a pheasant after all, but it gave Rosebell a terrible fright as it flew up almost from beneath her feet, and there in the grass lay four brown eggs. If the keeper came along now, he might think she was stealing them.

"Jack!" cried Rosebell, beginning to sob; and, as she repeated her cry, Jack himself appeared at the end of the glade, holding a dead rabbit in his hand.

Rosebell stared in horror as the boy held his prize up.

"Fat one, eh?" he said. "Tom and Sam have them. I only care for the sport, but ferrets aren't the same as having a gun. Are you coming to see? Tom is in there."

"Oh, Jack!" sobbed Rosebell, "if Hales comes, we—we shall be taken to prison. Don't you know it—it is poaching—and dreadfully wicked to—to steal the Squire's rabbits?"

Jack laughed, swinging the rabbit by the ears.

"It's sport," he replied. "I don't know much about poaching, it seems a queer idea. 'Way in Temagnani we took what we liked in the way of game. But it makes more fun to have to keep *cave* when the old keeper comes along."

But Rosebell saw nothing to laugh at, it was all dreadful to her. She clutched at Jack's sleeve.

"Do throw that p—poor rabbit away," she pleaded, "and come home with me. I'm ter—terrified."

She looked it — and Jack's impatient

frown changed to a half-contemptuous smile.

"You little coward!" he said; "but, of course, you're only a girl. What on earth made you come dancing after me, spoiling the fun?"

"Dad's got a letter from some of your f — friends in C — Canada," stammered Rosebell, nearly in tears. "He—he wanted you, and I c—couldn't catch you up."

"Wait a tick," said Jack; and he plunged back into the thicket, coming back a few moments later without the rabbit.

"Come on," he said, holding out his hand to the little girl. "It's a shame to have made you cry, and I wish I hadn't called you a coward. You're the best of the whole lot."

Rosebell's tears dried as if by magic; she clutched at Jack's hand.

"Oh no!" she replied, "I'm much the worst of all of us; but—but, Jack, I *do* love you, and I do want to help you."

They were running back through the

JACK HELD HIS PRIZE UP

wood, and it was not till they were out again in the lane that Jack said: "Help me? *You* help me? That's queer."

Rosebell crimsoned. She had nearly told him how that had been the "job" Dad gave all of them when first Jack arrived, but she felt he would not like it, so she only replied humbly: "Of course, I know I'm only a girl, but—but——"

Jack squeezed her hand very hard. "I believe I know what you mean," he whispered; "and you *do* help, more than them all. One day I'll tell you why, but not now. Now, I'm thinking mostly about that letter."

Rosebell was rather disappointed. She had hoped he would have said he was rather sorry about the Squire's rabbits, but he was not even thinking of them—only of the letter from Canada. Did Jack wish he were back there amongst his mates of the camp, and the faithful Indians who had loved him? The child sighed, wishing Jack were not so difficult to ask questions

of, and also that he could understand that she, Helen, and Geoff wanted to help him to be good.

"Who can the letter be from?" said Jack aloud. "Maybe it is Silas. He was Father's best chum. Good old Silas! Do you mind now if I run *fast*, Rosebell?"

Rosebell, still sad at heart, answered: "Not a bit." I think she was rather glad to be alone.

CHAPTER V

Jack gets into Trouble

"Was there any news in the letter?" asked Rosebell later, meeting Jack, who was strolling along, his hands in his pockets, his eyes bent on the ground. It was so unlike Jack to think—unless of mischief; and he was fonder of doing that than of wasting time on thought about it.

"Yes," he replied, as he saw Rosebell was alone. "Come to the summer-house and I will tell you."

They went together, Rosebell well pleased to be taken into confidence.

"You mustn't tell the others what I say to you," said Jack. "Will you promise that? I hate the idea of what I say being gossiped about from one to the other."

What *funny* things Jack said! Rosebell got quite puzzled as to his meaning, and she dared not ask him to explain.

"Not even Geoff?" she asked wistfully; for Geoff had always been her chum, as much as a boy who goes to school can be chum to the little sister who has a governess at home.

"Certainly not Geoff. Promise?"

Rosebell looked into the dark, handsome face so near hers, and a great pity swelled her heart. She felt that to promise Jack this would be helping in doing the job which Dad had asked them all to undertake.

"Promise," she replied.

"I knew you would!" Jack's eyes brightened. "But there isn't much to say this time. It was Silas who wrote. Silas, who brought me over to England. Father once saved his life, and he is still grateful. I—I wish sometimes that Father had left me to Silas."

Tears sprang to Rosebell's eyes.

"Oh, Jack!" she said, "then you would never have come here."

"Well," retorted the boy fiercely, "and wouldn't you have been glad? I heard Nanna saying to Ann only last week that it was too bad of—of Father to have sent me, be—because your father wasn't well off, and that I was nothing but a trouble and expense."

"Dad would be very cross with Nanna if he knew she had said that," replied Rosebell. "I am sure he would much rather you were here than away in that camp; and *I* am glad you are here, dear Jack, I want you to stay always."

Jack gulped. "You're a brick, little Rosebell," he said. "I can't tell you what a difference you make to it all, but—but I'm not going to whine. I'll tell you about the letter. Silas misses me quite a bit. It's such a funny, nice letter! I can't read it to you, because Silas wouldn't like it; but he tells me all the news, and how they're getting on, and

how old Dinah caught Tom Thumb stealing her cookies and flung the frying-pan at his head, and all sorts of funny things like that, which wouldn't really amuse you, because you don't know fat Dinah or little Tom Thumb, or any of them; and at the end Silas says Jake Harrell has gone away from camp, and they hear he has staked out a big claim for gold, and is by way of making his fortune. Silas says he believes, if the truth were known, that claim ought to have been Dad's; but it is no use talking. We used to say in camp, what Jake grabs won't be worth squeezing when he lets go."

Rosebell was very interested, though she didn't understand all Jack's funny expressions.

"I wish you had part of the gold claim," she said. "Does it mean just digging up gold?"

Jack laughed; but before he had time to explain they heard Helen calling.

"Dad wants you again, Jack," said Helen as they came to meet her. "Squire

Wendell's keeper has been to see him. I hope you've not been trespassing."

She looked rather anxious, and Jack coloured. During his talk with Rosebell he had been making good resolutions, but Helen's "lecture face" only stiffened him. He did not answer, though he ran off towards the study. Rosebell caught her sister's hand.

"Will he be put in prison for trespassing?"

Helen shook her head. "I don't know; but Hales sounded quite grumpy, and Dad looked worried. How tiresome Jack is—always in mischief!"

"It wasn't mischief when he cooked for us," fired up Rosebell. "And he doesn't understand about trespassing. It's *our* fault, because Dad gave us the job of helping him and we've not done it."

Geoff came up as the little girls were speaking. He had heard Rosebell's last words, and of course wanted to know what "the row" was.

"Only Jack again," said Helen. "I'm sure I wish he were back in Canada. Nanna is quite right; it was too bad to send him."

Rosebell was quivering with indignation, her honest, rosy face clouded by unusual wrath.

"If *you* were Jack," she cried, "you wouldn't either of you be a bit better. I believe you'd be worse. He has no mother or dad, or anyone, and he's never had a cosy home like ours; for three years he'd had no home at all. And—and Dad gave him to us for our job. You know he did. He said it was work we could do for God, and we've not done it. We've left Jack alone—and he didn't understand about trespassing and poaching."

"There's no need to get in a temper about it," reproved Helen, walking off with her chin held rather high, because, you see, she did not want Rosebell to know how her conscience was pricking her. Geoff stood kicking at the stones

on the gravel path. He and Rosebell had always been chums, and his little sister's words had set his conscience pricking too.

"I believe that's true, Rosebell," he said. "I've been a beast."

"Perhaps we all have been," replied his sister.

"No, you've not," said Geoff vigorously. "You never are a beast like that. I expect Helen is—she's too good to be really good, if you understand; and *we've not done our job.*"

"Geoff," said Rosebell suddenly, "why aren't you and Jack real chums? I'm sure he's a million times nicer than Leonard."

Geoff did not answer at once. He was too honest to tell a lie, and all at once he felt ashamed of himself. He had let that little gap formed by jealousy grow, till it had become quite wide. Now he felt mean and guilty. Jack and he could have been the best of chums if he had not been jealous.

"I'd rather not tell you, Rosebell," he said at last, "but it's my fault about Jack. Yes, I can see it is my fault. I—I've been horrid. You were quite right about Jack not having a home and parents. It must have been hard for him coming here to strangers. I wish I'd been different."

"You can be now," retorted Rosebell cheerfully. "We must all start again, and be real comrades. I know a good plan. We'll start our camp in the woods. There are three weeks of holiday, and you'll see we shall be as happy as happy! We must tell Jack it is all going to be different. Poor Jack!"

"I'll go and find him at once," cried Geoff, very repentant of his unkindness. "He shall be the leader, because he understands about forests. And he's finished my bow and arrows."

"Jack's with Dad," sighed Rosebell. "Don't you remember about Hales the keeper? I'm afraid it means a dreadful row, for—for—(don't tell Helen, Geoff)—

but they,—he, and Tom and Sam—have been rabbiting in the Squire's woods."

Geoff whistled. Squire Wendell was such a very alarming personage.

"I think I ought to go in and tell Dad it was partly my fault," he said. "Jack's far too proud to make excuses. Wait here, Rose; I'll be back soon."

But Geoff was not back soon, and Rosebell was quite cold with waiting about when footsteps came along the path.

It was Jack who came—alone.

Rosebell sprang to meet him.

"Where's Geoff?" she asked.

Jack was pale, and there were marks of tears on his face, but he smiled at Rosebell.

"I came to tell you that Dr. Orsdale and Geoff have gone to the Squire's," he said.

Rosebell's eyes grew round with surprise. "To the Squire's!" she echoed.

"Yes. The—the keeper has been here, about the poaching. One of his boys saw Tom and Sam and me the other day

when we were rabbiting. The Squire is very angry. I don't quite know what he wanted to do, but it was almost a case of being sent to prison. The doctor has gone to the—the Manor to explain." The boy's lips trembled. "If there is a row," he added, "and Tom and Sam are in it, I shall have to be in it too—we were partners."

"But what has Geoff to do with it?" asked Rosebell perplexed.

Jack turned his head away, and began plucking nervously at a flowering currant bush.

"He came in," said he, "whilst the doctor w—was talking to me. I didn't know what he meant when he said out: 'Dad, it's my fault more than Jack's.'"

"His fault? Oh!" cried Rosebell, "*I* know what he meant—at least I can guess. It is because he's not been proper chums with you, isn't that it? I knew it, but I couldn't understand."

"That's it," jerked out Jack. He found

it difficult to talk even to Rosebell of all the foolish feeling which had existed between him and Geoff.

"But now," went on the boy hurriedly, "it will never be like *that* again. I can't tell you everything, Rosebell, but Geoff and I *are* going to be friends, and Dr. Orsdale will not send me away—yet."

"Send you away?"

"Well, he's sent Tom away. I heard him say so. He says Tom ought to have known better than to chum with Sam, who is a bad lot. So Tom is going. I told the doctor if Tom went I ought to go, and he—he was talking about school—and—and other things which *meant* going away, when Geoff came in."

"I'm so glad," said Rosebell. "Oh dear! there is Helen coming. I suppose it is time for tea, and I don't want mine a bit."

"I do," laughed Jack; "I'm hungry as a hunter. I'll give you half-way start, Rosebell, and race you to the house."

Geoff was late for tea, and Jack was all alone in the schoolroom, busy as usual with wood and knife, when the other came in.

"Girls sewing, I suppose?" said Geoff. "I'm glad I'm not a girl. What a ripping boat, Jack!"

Jack put down his work and stood up.

"Geoff," he said, "I want to thank you."

Geoff grew scarlet.

"For goodness' sake *don't*, old boy," he urged; "I hate it. But—Jack, it's all right. The Squire was in an extra beaming temper, and said he was going to overlook the whole business. You mustn't go to those woods again; but—why, it's all right! and—and when shall we go in for that camp game?"

Jack held out his hand, and Geoff gripped it. Both were as shy as could be, but they tried to show what they felt by nearly wringing each other's hands off.

"Won't you be playing cricket," asked Jack, "with your friend?"

"What?—Leonard? He's got chicken-pox, or finger-ache, and has to be coddled. Anyway, I never was keen on that cricket. Len Broughton doesn't understand real fun, and I'm sure you do. I've been itching all the time to have camps and adventure. But oh, bother it all! I got the hump, or the green-eyed monster, or some rotten idea into my noddle, and you know how it's been. I'm jolly glad *this* business came to show me what an owl I was making of myself."

Jack gulped.

"Don't!" he entreated; "I can't stick it. Let's forget *all* that, and start pals from this evening. I've longed to be."

"Shake again," laughed Geoff, with unsteady merriment; "or strike palms, as the Yankees say. We are 'pards' now, and I think somehow Rosebell ought to be too. She's always stuck up for you."

"Of course," replied Jack, "Rosebell too; she's——" He had nearly said 'she

best of all", but he changed it to "she's a ripper".

So the ugly gap, dug by Jealousy, was bridged and filled in; and no one was more delighted than Rosebell when she found Jack and Geoff "nose and knees" together over a new piece of carpentering. She felt she wanted to hug them, and call them "her dear boys". There was quite a mystery over that carpentering, but in the end Geoff had to confess they were making a work-box for her. Rosebell was delighted. How happy they all were! and that, too, so soon after everything had "gone wrong". She did not mention the poaching, and showed her wisdom by not asking Geoff any questions about his visit to the Squire's till Jack had gone off to fetch something.

"I'm not sorry Tom is going," she said when she had heard all. "He's not a very kind boy. Last week he threw a stone at Jiggles, and I told him if he did it again I should tell Dad."

"I wish you'd told me," cried Geoff,

'I'd have punched his head for him. Poor old Jigs!" and he called his pet up on to his lap, kissing and cuddling him. "Rosebell," he went on, "you are going to be in it with us—in the camp I mean. We are going to start to-morrow. It will be too late to start a wigwam, because the hols. will soon be over, but we can go on the war-path, and we shall have a great lark."

Rosebell clapped her hands. She was a regular tomboy, and loved a frolic far better than sewing or reading and other "nice lady-like pursuits", as Nanna called them.

"Jack," she said, as Jack entered the room, "I'm coming to your camp to-morrow. Shall I bring provisions?"

"Rather!" said Jack; "and we want some very big coloured handkerchiefs. Have you any?"

They had not, and, worse still, there was no money to buy them. Jack only possessed sixpence, and both Geoff and Rosebell were nearly as poor.

"It's time we went on the war-path," laughed Jack, "since the larder is empty."

Rosebell flushed. "But you won't kill anything *really*?" she shuddered, remembering that poor rabbit.

Jack laughed again. He knew what she was thinking of, and laughed because it did seem so strange that people in England should make so much fuss about a few wild rabbits. "No," he replied, "it shall all be make-believe, excepting that you are our Queen, and we have to obey you."

He made ever such a grand bow, and cried: "Hail, Queen Corn-hair!" which Rosebell thought sounded a very nice name.

"I'm awfully glad I'm a queen," she confessed; "it's much nicer than being a girl who loves sewing, and going out to tea with ever such proper friends, like Helen."

"I suppose we were all born different," said Jack, "and I was born for adventures."

"And mischief," added a voice in the

doorway; "and mischief, Master Jack, there's no mistaking *that*."

Of course, it was Ann, bringing in the schoolroom lamp; Ann, whose puckered face was more severe than usual, for the old servant had felt it was not at all the right thing for Hales the keeper to have to come here complaining—and not even about their own children either! Ann did not like Jack at all, and would have been very pleased to hear "he was going back where he came from"; but she kept her opinion to herself, since Cook was inclined to take Jack's part, and old Nanna was too loyal to her master to pass remarks about any of his arrangements. But Jack was quite aware of the old parlour-maid's dislike, and heartily returned it.

"Oh yes!" he said sweetly. "Mischief, I *love* that! How I do wish you and I were together at the camp, Ann; how surprised you would be!"

But Ann flounced out of the room, declaring sourly that she wasn't going to be

made game of at her time of life by a boy from the backwoods.

"Let's play Snap," said Rosebell, as she saw Jack's frown. "I'll call Helen, and we'll end with a game of Old Maid."

And without waiting for a reply Rosebell ran off to find her sister.

Jack slowly put up his tools.

"I wonder whether we should quarrel *all* day long if it were not for Rosebell," said he.

CHAPTER VI

The Camp in the Woods

Next morning the children got up feeling they were going to have a "nice day". Do you know that feeling? It is ever so pleasant, and makes you readier than usual to jump out of bed, and rush to the window to see whether it is going to be fine.

Jack and Geoff were up and out long before their usual time, and came rushing in to breakfast rosy and excited.

Dr. Orsdale noticed how friendly the two boys were, and smiled. He was not afraid of Jack doing Geoff any harm. He felt sure the boy was honest and true, though as wild as a hawk. Of course Geoff was not the wisest or gentlest of companions, but the doctor knew his little son meant to do his best.

If only the children's mother were able to be home, thought the poor man, she would advise and influence. But it seemed impossible to send a friendless, homeless boy away without doing all they could for him. Yet Jack *was* a problem to the doctor.

"All ready, mates?" said Geoff briskly, when they had made off in safety to the garden.

"Rosebell, where are the provisions?"

"She must be Stella Shot-in-the-Eye," laughed Jack. "She was ever such a nice Algonquin woman. Well done, Stella, those cakes look good!"

"And there are three hard-boiled eggs as well," said Rosebell. "Now are we going to begin to be Red Indians?"

Jack had wanted Geoff to be leader and chief, but Geoff had refused. He did not know how to do the "real thing"; Jack did! They started off on a wolf hunt through imaginary snow, and you have no idea what a game they made of it! Stella

Shot-in-the-Eye flopped down in a ditch nearly full of dry leaves, and her heroic companions, pretending she was buried in a snow-drift, dragged her out "at peril of their lives". After this they held a pow-wow, over a small stick fire, lighted at the corner of a cornfield, where gipsies had been before them, and here they made a first meal on rock-cakes and eggs, which Jack gave queer Indian names to. Then they went in search of wolves, fancied they heard terrible howlings in the distance, and fled for their lives.

"To the trees, lads," shouted Jack breathlessly; "we can't escape! To the trees, or—or we shall be torn to a thousand pieces!"

"I'm afraid Rosebell's dress was the only thing torn as she scrambled to safety.

"I really *did* feel as if a wolf were trying to bite my leg," panted the little girl as she got astride a branch. "It gave me the creepiest, crawliest sensation."

"Listen to the brutes howling," chuckled

Geoff; "and their red eyes gleaming. I say, this *is* topping! I wish there were real wolves."

"Do you?" laughed Jack. "I guess not! I remember Tom Thumb got held up by a pack three winters ago out in the forest, and he came back to camp next day with a face like chalk and his hair like a hedgehog's quills."

"It must be horrid," sighed Rosebell. "Have the wolves gone away?"

"Yes. Look out though, Queen Cornhair! Mark that fallen trunk. I guess a timber wolf is skulking behind it. Thought so. Ha! Bang, bang!"

He dragged Rosebell down, and, kneeling over her, shot three arrows into the tree trunk. But his own dismay was as great as Rosebell's when an angry roar rose from behind the timber, and a man's very red face appeared into view. I am afraid the tramp—who had also been "camping out" for the night down behind that log—was not very intelligent about Red Indian

games, for he was in an awful temper. One of the arrows had grazed the tip of his nose, and he bellowed so loudly that you might have thought it was shot off.

Rosebell and Jack were both so startled that they stood quite still, whilst the tramp asked in very rude language "wot they was gitting at". He was scrambling still more angrily to his feet, with the threat of "threshin' in to someone", when Geoff came to the rescue.

"For your lives!" he yelled cheerfully. "The Blackfeet are on our track. Come on—for your lives!"

"*H*'I'll teach you, Mister, to call a *h*onest man's feet black," bawled the furious tramp. "I'll teach yer to hinsalt John Bibbles. *H*'I'll——"

But it was no use to shout, since there was no one left to listen, for the three children were fleeing through the woods as though a real tribe of foes was behind them.

It was not till they reached Fern

Hollow that they threw themselves down to rest.

"A real adventure!" panted Jack. "You did come to the rescue spiffingly, Geoff. I'd really forgotten about running away."

How they laughed at this; how they laughed at everything! The adventure, after all, was nothing more than a joke, since, as Rosebell said, the arrow had not really made the blood come, and she was sure the scratch could not have hurt John Bibbles very much.

If the little girl was still rather nervous lest their "Blackfoot" foe should find them, she did not tell the others, and they finished up the provisions with great relish. Being on the war-path makes one tremendously hungry, and when every crumb had been devoured they all explored the Hollow.

"This shall be our camp," decided Jack, "and we will meet here when we have any great plans to discuss. Do you like Red Indian games, O Queen?"

"Lovely!" said Rosebell with enthu-

siasm. "What is going to happen to us this afternoon?"

"More Indians, or a bear or two," replied Geoff; "or shall it be just exploring, Chief Clear-Sky?"

"Exploring," said Jack; "and we must save the Queen from further danger. Hist! a deer; follow me silently, and we shall have venison for supper."

Of course they all found wriggling along, like three clumsy snakes, *much* more fun than walking upright on their two feet. Rosebell did not "stalk" very well, for she would keep bobbing up her head, so it was all her fault that the imaginary deer escaped. I can't tell you all the adventures they had. They fished in a tiny stream, and landed three salmon; they shot and skinned a bear; they brought three hares and some duck home in their sack, and finally they discovered a band of Choctaws seated round a camp-fire in a hollow beneath them. This was the *last* adventure, for Geoff, in leaning over the really steep

slope which led down from the woods to a narrow road beneath, slipped and went head over heels down the bank, to the horror of old Lady Darsdale, one of his father's patients, who happened to be driving by in her landau.

It was rather awful for the children, because the old lady insisted on stopping the carriage and sending her footman to enquire as to whether the little boy was hurt.

Geoff was not hurt at all, but he was beautifully plastered with sticky clay and brambles. Jack was choking with suppressed laughter, and even Rosebell tittered as she saw the very grand footman help a very muddy Geoff to his feet, and bring him back to the carriage. Those on the bank above could not hear what the old lady said, but presently the carriage drove on, and Geoff, very red in the face, came scrambling back to them. He looked in disgusted reproach at their mirthful faces.

"All very well for you to grin," he said, "but she was worse than a whole tribe of

Choctaws. She wanted to drive me home. Think of it! Think of sitting in that carriage in these clothes! Why, I should have *stuck* to the cushions. I think she saw that at last, for she said how very thankful she was I was not hurt, and that I had given her palpitations when she saw me bouncing down the bank. I was glad when I could escape, and she drove off shaking her head and saying: 'Poor Dr. Orsdale, poor Dr. Orsdale!' I'm afraid she was shocked when she found I wasn't killed."

"Shocked!" giggled Rosebell. "Darling Geoff! if *only* you could see yourself. You are just plastered. I wonder what Nanna will say?"

"She'll say it's my fault," said Jack rather grimly. "Couldn't you have a bit of a wash before we go back, Geoff? I think we could make you look better."

"There's the stream close by," added Rosebell. "At any rate you can scrub your face and hands; I've three hankies."

It would have been wiser if Geoff had been content with washing face and hands; but somehow when they reached the stream they began to be ambitious, so off came Geoff's coat and boots and long football stockings, and all three began washing "Indian fashion". I suppose Indian fashion did not suit English clothes, for somehow that coat looked *much* worse after its washing than before. The yellow clay had now run all over it, making it a yellow tweed. The stockings were not quite so bad, so they were hung up to dry whilst they had another "go" at the coat. Worse and worse! It was beginning to "cockle" now in the stupidest way, so *that* was hung up too, and the three sat on the bank of the stream to wait for the clothes to dry.

"Tell us an adventure, Jack," said Rosebell.

"About finding gold," added Geoff. "When we grow up, Jack, I believe we'll be gold finders."

"And I," added Rosebell, "will come too, and do the cooking and washing."

They roared over that, for Rosebell's washing did not look very promising as it flapped in the wind overhead.

"I don't remember half the yarns the boys used to tell," said Jack regretfully, "they told so many; but Silas said most of them were 'busters', which means lies or exaggerations. But one of the boys, Ned Gravely, once found gold near Black Bull Water. It was a horrid place—ever, ever so lonely; the Indians would not go near it, because they said ghosts lived there. Ned didn't care a button about ghosts, and he thought he might find gold; so he went there, and he *did* find gold—three great nuggets, lying for anyone to see in a deep narrow stream. Of course Ned was looking all the time for more, and the night before he'd settled to leave Black Bull Water, his nuggets were stolen by an Indian. Wasn't it queer? No Indian *ever* went to that part, but, when Ned woke up

that night, he saw an Indian kneeling down and gathering up the gold. He jumped up, but the Indian was too quick for him; he jumped up too, and ran away. Ned followed him into the forest, but it was too dark to see, and the fellow got off. Ned was always whining about his nuggets."

"And didn't *you* want to go to Black Bull Water?" asked Geoff eagerly.

Jack shook his head. "Father always went alone when he was on any big job," he replied. "Silas hinted that if all had been square he ought to have pegged out the claim Jake Harrell made his fortune over. But Father died, and Jake has left the camp. It's no use fretting. If—if Father could have lived, I wouldn't have minded about all the claims in the world."

Flop! Down came the coat over Geoff's head, just when Jack's story was becoming sad and difficult. I think they were all rather obliged to the coat, for it set them laughing; and then Rosebell said she was sure it would be tea-time, and they had

promised to be back, so Geoff put on the nasty cold stockings and muddy-coloured coat, and they all raced home, forgetting they were Red Indians, and only remembering they were very hungry children.

Nanna was horrified at the sight of Geoff's coat, and told him that he deserved the worst cold in the world for daring to put those damp things on; but Geoff this time did not get what he deserved, for he never sneezed once during the rest of the week, though he knew Nanna was listening for him to do so.

You must be thinking that all this time Helen was having a very dull time, for the others seldom invited her to share their games; but you are quite mistaken. Helen did not care for Red Indian or messy games, and she had several friends of her own. Her dearest friend's name was Cecilia, and I don't fancy either Geoff or Rosebell liked Cecilia at all; she was nearly fourteen, and even more grown-up than Helen. She *actually* liked clothes! This

amused and amazed Geoff and Rosebell greatly, and they told Jack about it.

"Fancy," said Rosebell, "isn't it *odd*? Cecilia likes putting on her best frocks. I can't understand it. I hope when I'm fourteen I shan't grow like that. I can't imagine myself not wanting to make toffee and play Red Indians, and all sorts of lovely messy games."

"You never will be like that," declared Geoff, hugging her. "You're much too jolly. And who cares whether Cecilia is dressed in sackcloth or satin? All I know is that I long to pull her long red pig-tail just to see if she would get in a temper."

Cecilia was very good-tempered as well as very grand, and to Jack's horror she was inclined to make a fuss of him.

"He is so handsome," said Cecilia to Helen; "like one of the old Greeks. I don't know whether it was Diogenes or Anti-someone, but he was very handsome —just like Jack."

Rosebell, hearing the remark, exploded with laughter.

"Diogenes was the man with the tub," she cried, "and I think he must have been too dirty to be handsome."

Afterwards she told Jack what Cecilia had said, and she and Geoff nicknamed him Diogenes on the spot.

The holidays were simply melting away now—only a week—only three days—before school and lessons began again. But, as Rosebell said consolingly, the days were getting long, and they would still have from after tea till bedtime every day, and all Saturday.

"I'm going to do my sewing in the morning," announced the little girl, "to have more time with you. Helen says you would rather be by yourselves, but——"

"Rot!" cried the boys in a breath. They could not imagine sunny Rosebell being in anyone's way.

Helen and Cecilia were getting busier and busier over their bazaar. Cecilia, who

lived close by, would come in after tea, and help make really dainty pincushions, dress dolls, and "invent" all those pretty useless things which help to make a bazaar stall look nice.

Rosebell was only allowed to stuff cushions with bran, for her sewing was just a long-stitch-and-a-thank-you; but she stuffed away cheerfully, quite content that the others should get all the admiration for their pretty work.

"You boys ought to help us," said Cecilia one day. "The bazaar is for such a good object; and it is *better* than a bazaar, it is quite a fancy fair. There will be stalls, of course, and cocoanut shies, shooting gallery, Aunt Sally, a May-pole dance, singing, and all sorts of fun. Mr. Ballaway is very rich, and the Park is beautiful. He is giving it all over to us for the two days."

Cecilia spoke as if Mr. Ballaway was giving the Park over to Helen and herself, instead of which they were very small

fry indeed; but her remark had set Jack thinking.

"We might help," he said to Geoff. "I have an idea. Come and talk it over."

They ran off, leaving Rosebell behind to the dull job of stuffing pincushions and listening to very "grown-up" talk.

"Do tell me the secret," she pleaded later, when she had found her beloved boys perched on the top of the fence. "Are you really going to help in the bazaar?"

The boys chuckled.

"We're going to be the biggest attraction," said Geoff; "eh, Jack? We're going across to the Park now to ask Mr. Ballaway about it. When we come back we'll tell you, if you're good."

"Rosebell's always good," declared Jack—a remark which amused Rosebell very much, for she knew what a big mistake it was.

The boys were not very long gone, and they found Rosebell awaiting them patiently. Jack waved his cap from afar.

"We've got leave!" he cried. "Mr. Ballaway was awfully pleased. And you shall help us, Rosebell, only you must promise 'faithful injun' not to tell anyone—not even Helen. If you do, you will spoil everything. Promise?"

"Of course!" cried Rosebell. "*Do* tell me quick! I am sure it is a million times nicer than stuffing pincushions—though I can't possibly guess what it can be."

"Then you shall hear," said Geoff, "as a reward for being a good secret-keeper."

"And because," added Jack, "we cannot do it without you."

CHAPTER VII

A Bazaar and a Surprise

"It is some babyish idea of Rosebell's probably," was Helen's verdict when she heard that the three juniors were going to provide a "surprise" entertainment at the great bazaar.

Helen was really quite as curious as Cecilia, and very disgusted at not being taken into confidence; but then, as Geoff frankly explained to her, she would certainly tell Cecilia, and if Cecilia knew she would never keep it to herself, and so the whole fun would be spoiled.

So Helen declared that the great secret was sure to be nothing at all, and went on with her "tidies" and pincushions as though the whole success of the bazaar depended on them.

Meantime Geoff, Jack, and Rosebell were most mysteriously busy—and good. At least, since no mischief could be laid to their account, they were supposed to be good, though Nanna and Ann had their doubts.

Helen would have liked to know what all the mystery was about, but she was too proud to ask, and so told Cecilia it was probably "nonsense".

The "nonsense", however, took the three children regularly off to some secret haunt directly school and lessons were over, and they only appeared at meals. Nanna was the most frankly pleased and puzzled.

"Seein' your clothes don't get messed, and there's no complaints from the garden," the old woman said, "I don't mind how long the secret lasts."

"It won't last beyond the bazaar," said Rosebell, giving a little skip of delight. "How surprised you'll all be when you see us rou—" She had to clap her hand

over her mouth in dismay at having nearly "let out" the secret.

Helen and Cecilia missed their bran stuffer very much. Rosebell had been very useful, doing all the fiddling jobs whilst they went on with the pretty ones; now they discovered how nimble her fingers had been.

"You're really getting too old to be always about with the boys," lectured Helen; "I'm sure Mother would much rather you were beginning to like needlework."

Rosebell sighed. "But I can't like what I don't like," she said rather piteously, "and I hate needlework. But what we are doing is just as much for the bazaar, Helen, and Mr. Ballaway thinks we shall make lots of pennies."

Helen did not reply, but went on with her own task of putting a dainty bow round the neck of a freakish black velvet cat.

The day of the bazaar was beautifully fine, and Jack, Geoff, and Rosebell seemed

quite as anxious over the weather as Helen herself.

"We couldn't have done it," said Rosebell, "if it had been wet."

"What are you going to wear?" asked Helen, as she laid out, ready, the pretty "peasant" dress which all at her stall were to wear.

Rosebell chuckled. "You'll see," she replied. "That's in the secret!"

That tiresome secret! Helen felt quite glad that after to-day she would hear no more of it. But she did feel curious as she watched the three younger ones run off directly after breakfast, and perhaps she experienced the faint longing that she had *not* been quite so grown up.

The Park was a beautiful old place, and being allowed to wander all over the lovely grounds was a great attraction to many far beyond the village.

Helen and Cecilia arrived very early, and the stall was soon ready with many helpers to assist in setting out all the pretty

knick-knacks. When all was finished in preparation for the opening ceremony, the two girls strolled off to look round.

"What *are* those children up to?" said Cecilia. "Look, Helen, is that *Rosebell*?"

Helen looked, and gave a cry of surprise. It certainly was Rosebell, who stood before a carefully closed-in space, with a bell in her hand. The space had been closed by tarpaulin sheets, secured by big posts, and in the centre was a sheet of cardboard on which was painted in black letters:

"This way to the Pow-wow. Realistic Scalp Dance, as performed by Choctaw Indians. Admision 6*d*."

There was only one "s" in Admission, which pointed to the fact that the Choctaws were not very good spellers!

Rosebell's dress was made of khaki twill and covered with feathers—chiefly from the poultry yard! Her fair, fuzzy curls bristled with the longest feathers, and even in the distance Helen could see the rosy cheeks were unnaturally brown.

But the keeper of their own particular stall called them, and they had to run back, more curious, more puzzled, more vexed than ever that the secret had been kept from them.

Everyone came to the bazaar to be amused and to spend money. Everyone seemed in the best holiday mood, and Helen and Cecilia were kept very busy running hither and thither, doing up parcels and selling their wares. There was too big a crowd for them to see what was going on in other parts of the grounds, but soon they began to hear their customers talking of the "Indian dancing", and how wonderful it was. Presently Dr. Orsdale came to the stall, smiling at sight of Helen's flushed cheeks.

"Getting on?" he asked. "And very busy too, I suppose?"

"Not just at this moment," replied Helen. "Mrs. Questock told Cecilia and me to go to tea; we need not be back for half an hour."

"And do tell us, Doctor," pleaded Cecilia, "what those pickles are up to. We saw Rosebell in the quaintest costume standing outside a sheeted enclosure. I wonder Mr. Ballaway——"

"Ah!" said Dr. Orsdale, with a twinkle in his kind eyes. "You mean the Indian dance. Come along and see it. I am sure Mrs. Questock won't mind if the half-hour is a very long one, for I see you have sold most of your pretty things."

The girls went with him, curious, eager, but perhaps a teeny bit annoyed at being "spared" so easily; it would have been nicer if Mrs. Questock had said she could not get on without them!

"What a crowd!" said Cecilia.

"What a lot of extra sixpences!" laughed the doctor. "Rosebell will be weighed down with her receipts. Oh, I see she has two Boy Scouts to help her!"

The "Pow-wow" (whatever it was) seemed to be *the* attraction of the fancy fair, judging by the crowd outside the

high sheet. Rosebell, in her "Indian array" of khaki and feathers, was just one big dimple of delight; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkling, and she laughed in glee as the silver sixpences came raining in. The two Boy Scouts had their work cut out for them, too; and long ago had they all ceased to give tickets.

Rosebell's dimples broadened (if possible) at sight of Dad and the others.

"We're making pounds and pounds and pounds!" she cried, "and the boys aren't a bit tired yet. Mr. Ballaway says it is the success of the day."

Her father patted her shoulder. "Well done, Minnehaha!" he said, and passed on behind the mysterious sheet, whilst Rosebell called after him that she was Queen Corn-hair or Stella-Something-Else.

Helen gave a little gasp of surprise.

Really! Could these be the boys?

There were six of them, for, all unknown, four of Geoff's school chums had been in

the secret too; and in the centre of the piece of meadow staked off for them was a very, very large fire, with a shallow ditch dug round, and about the fire leapt and danced six small befeathered Indians, who carried queer-looking knives, and solemnly performed the dance which Jack had seen so very often executed by the Choctaw Indians in the wilds of Canada.

It was, as Mr. Ballaway remarked to Dr. Orsdale, really a marvellous performance. Jack had taught his companions with skill and patience, whilst he himself was a splendid dancer, not only curving, leaping, swaying as if he had not a bone in his body, but telling the tale of the scalping and an Indian's joy in vengeance by every vivid expression of his dark face, every gesture, every emphatic grunt.

"Who's the black-eyed boy?" asked Mr. Ballaway. "I understand he lives with you. A fine little lad, handsome too. What a way he has with that knife! You

might really think he was raising his victim's scalp. A regular little demon!"

Helen and Cecilia did not wait to listen to the talk of the elders; like everyone else, they were fascinated by the wonderful dance.

"It's really creepy," said Cecilia. "I shall dream someone is waving a scalping knife over my head. I shall be quite afraid of Jack after this. But how beautifully he dances! They all look real wild Indians."

Helen laughed. She did not want anyone to guess that she was annoyed at the tremendous success of the younger ones' nonsense. She was quite aware that everyone would be talking of the great Powwow at the bazaar, and no one would particularly notice the cleverness of one little girl who helped at Mrs. Questock's stall. The others *might* have told her! But Helen was honest, and knew quite well that if they had told her a hundred times she would not have taken part in

what she would have called a stupid game.

"We ought to be going back to our stall," she said rather stiffly, "there's nothing more to see."

Cecilia clapped her hands.

"Look at Jack!" she cried; "he has thrown Geoff over his shoulder. How strong he is! I love it when they put their hands on their knees and leap about, grunting Haugh! Haugh! Haugh! Oh, stay a little longer, Helen!" And she stepped eagerly forward to take a final peep at the dancers.

"Farther back, Cecilia!" called Dr. Orsdale, but it was too late. A spark had flown out and caught Cecilia's frock. A tongue of flame ran up one of the bunched panniers of Liberty muslin, and the next instant Cecilia would have been ablaze had not Jack leapt to the rescue, and, catching her in his arms, rolled her over on the grass, beating fiercely at the flame.

It was all over in a twink, and already Jack was scrambling to his feet when the crowd swarmed about them. Dr. Orsdale lifted up the half-fainting Cecilia, and ordered the throng of people to stand back.

"I don't think she is hurt," he said, after one glance at the big holes burned in the pretty muslin. "She was only scared. What about your hands though, my brave boy?" and he turned to Jack.

Jack only laughed as he picked up his knife.

"They're all right," he said, and went leaping back to his place, the crowd cheering loudly as he recommenced his dance.

Dr. Orsdale carried Cecilia across to the house, Helen following in tears over her friend's accident.

But already Cecilia had recovered enough to lament over her burned frock.

"I shall have to p—p—pin it," she said, looking in dismay at the gaping holes. "Oh dear! I *was* frightened.

"And with reason," said the doctor gravely. "If it had not been for that brave lad, you might have been burned to death. I do not think it is a time to cry over a hole in your frock, my dear, but to thank God for preserving you."

Cecilia looked ashamed, and Helen put her arms round her friend. "I was terrified," she whispered, as her father turned away. "I thought you would be killed. That horrid Pow-wow!"

Mr. Ballaway's housekeeper was very kind and sympathetic. She brought the girls their tea to a quiet sitting-room, and quickly stitched over the ugly holes in Cecilia's dress. By five o'clock both Helen and her friend felt well enough to return to the stall. Cecilia was still pale, and her frock looked rather one-sided, but she showed pluck in insisting on going on with her selling; indeed she thoroughly enjoyed the sympathy of those who knew of the accident. It made her feel quite the heroine to be spoken of as "the young

lady who had nearly got burnt", and she almost regretted that she had not had a nice little burn, just big enough to enable her to wear her arm in a sling!

Everyone was talking of Jack's bravery, which did not interest Helen and Cecilia so much; but Rosebell nearly forgot to ask for her sixpences, so breathless was her excitement over the hero tale.

"I loved to hear them cheer you," she said to Jack, when the Pow-wow was closed for the day, and the weary Red Indians sat down to a well-earned tea. "I wanted to say hip-hip-hooray too. But oh, Jack, I'm sure your hand is burned, I can see it is."

"It's all right," said Jack. "I'm as hungry as ten hunters. Corporal Rain-in-the-Face, pass me those dough-nuts or I'll scalp you in real earnest!"

Dancing at a Pow-wow all the afternoon, scalping your enemies, is just as thirsty as it is hungry work. Never did strawberry cream ices taste as good as

those ices, never were cream buns and chocolate cakes so good. The heroes of the fair were none too pleased to be interrupted over their feasting by Mr. Ballaway, Cecilia and her father, Dr. Orsdale and Helen. Jack had just commenced his sixth ice, and Geoff was about to propose the health of the Choctaws in iced coffee when their visitors arrived.

Poor Jack! how the others sympathized with him. Cecilia nearly cried in thanking him for saving her life, and Cecilia's father must have hurt the boy's burnt hand awfully when he shook it. I think Dr. Orsdale understood best that the hero and his "tribe" wanted badly to be left in peace to eat! As soon, indeed, as they were out of sight Geoff seized his coffee-glass.

"To the health of the Chief Putting-out-Fire," he laughed, "and all his braves, not forgetting Miss Brave over there, who is as good as any! Now, Noel Jeryl, leave me one of those raspberry buns."

"I couldn't dance *now*," sighed Noel,

"if you offered me a hundred pounds," and he looked sadly at the empty cake dish.

When Dr. Orsdale saw Jack's burns—as ne insisted on doing when his three particular Choctaws arrived home — he was inclined to say there must be no Pow-wow for him next day. But Jack pleaded hard.

"It would be such a pity," he urged; "and it doesn't hurt—much."

Dr. Orsdale knew all about the hurting, and he could not help admiring the boy's pluck. He was more than ever glad that he had not sent Jack away, for, in spite of wild-hawk ways, he was sure the boy had the making of a fine character.

With some reluctance he gave leave for Jack to perform his scalp dance, and only on the understanding that the burn was better next day.

Of course it was better, and of course Jack danced, and of course the Pow-wow was the great success of the bazaar, and I am afraid it is equally "of course" that

the performers thought themselves very clever indeed.

Mr. Ballaway was so delighted with them that he invited the whole Choctaw tribe, including Queen Corn-hair, to spend the afternoon at the Park next Saturday.

"Shall we ask for you to come too, Helen?" asked Rosebell, seeing the disappointment on Helen's face; but the latter only shook her head, and said she did not want to go a bit, which was not *quite* true. Indeed, in these days Helen was often feeling sorry she had tried to grow up so soon, and she would look wistfully after the others as they went scampering off to their play. Once, three days after the bazaar, she followed them, resolved to join too. She found all three lying flat amongst a very grubby tangle of grass and nettles, wriggling along in the direction of a copse.

"What *are* you doing?" she asked in disgust.

Rosebell laughed up at her. "Indians on the track of a deer," she replied; "it's

such fun. Jack is teaching us to do it properly; and down there by the water meadow we have a gold claim staked out; and we are going to fix up a real tent, and I shall make stew for them, like Dinah used to for the boys in the camp; we've got a ripping old pot and a tri—tripod to hang it to."

Helen gave up in despair. She did not see *any* fun in wriggling along the ground or stinging herself with nettles; she found nothing amusing in the idea of digging for what was not there, or cooking a horrid mess in a dirty old pot. So Helen walked back to the house rather sadly, rather forlornly, as she listened to the boys' cheering and Rosebell's shrill squeals of laughter.

"Jack is ripping at games," Geoff told his father. "He's chief in everything with the boys, except cricket and football. Dad, when I'm a man I *may* be a prospector, mayn't I? A camp must be so jolly."

"Is it?" asked Dr. Orsdale, glancing from Geoff to Jack, who stood by the win-

dow. "Well, time enough, my son, in the next five years for you to make up your mind as to what you will be. Already you have chosen post work, engine-driving, detectiving, and a dozen other such 'professions', so we must wait and see."

"Ah! but this is different," urged Geoff. "Jack is going to be a prospector, and so shall I. What fun we shall have in Temagnani!"

"Does Jack wish so much to be back in the camp then?" asked the doctor, smiling rather sadly.

Jack flushed to the roots of his hair.

"It's not *that*," he said, "but——" and he ran out of the room.

Geoff had coloured too.

"Jack's quite happy here, Dad," he hastened to say, meeting Dad's look of enquiry; "but he's overheard old Ann talking again to Nanna about his being an expense, and it makes him sore. Besides, he was fond of his pals in the camp. He heard from one of them the other day

again. It wouldn't be nice of him to want to forget them, would it? for Silas and Tom Thumb and Red Axe loved him."

"Quite right, sonny," smiled his father, patting his shoulder. "Never forget old friends for the sake of new. There, run along, for I am busy; and don't let Jack get foolish ideas in his head about being an expense. I am glad to have him."

But when Geoff had gone the doctor sighed, for this question of expense was worrying him far more than any of the children guessed; and only that day had he received a letter from the doctor in Switzerland, to say that it would be unwise for Mrs. Orsdale to return home unless she could live in a bracing, healthy place—and this was exactly what the present home was not!

What *could* be done, though, when there was no money to buy another practice or pay the heavy expenses of a move?

No wonder the doctor sighed.

CHAPTER VIII

An Invitation and an Adventure

Mr. Ballaway knew exactly what boys liked, even though he was an old bachelor. He did not attempt to amuse his visitors, but left them to amuse themselves after cautioning them against setting the house on fire, breaking his favourite china, or becoming too "obstreperous".

"He's jolly, isn't he?" said Noel Jeryl. "This is the sort of coming out visiting I like. It's awful when the grown-ups will insist on amusing you, and asking all sorts of stupid questions. Votes I for a great exploration! *I* should like to visit the kitchen-garden."

That was so like Noel, who always seemed to be thinking of his inside, and never minded being teased about it either.

But the exploration *was* great fun, even though the Park gardener, having heard what visitors were expected, had locked the door of the kitchen-garden. Noel's face was comical with disgust, for he had been promising himself a feast of strawberries; but the others did not mind at all. Rosebell had discovered an enormous stack of pea-sticks between which it was quite easy to creep. They had a fine game of Follow-my-leader amongst these, and laughed till they ached when an old hen, who had chosen the sticks amongst which to "lay stray", flew up into Noel's face and beat her wings against it.

"Old brute," said Noel; "I've a good mind to eat her egg raw to pay her out;" which he promptly did, to the great amusement of Rosebell.

The Park gardens were delightful to roam about in, and soon a fine game of hide-and-seek was in progress.

How they shouted and laughed and scampered about, setting some young calves in

the orchard scampering too, as if they wanted to join the fun!

Noel proved the cleverest at hiding, and where do you think he was found at last? Why, in a corner of the dark old potting-shed, eating away at the strawberries which the gardener had put down before he took them across to the house! He had to "run for his life", to escape the punishment of the seekers, for his greediness, and finally fell sprawling in a swamp at the bottom of the meadow.

"There's the tea bell," cried Geoff. "A race for the house!"

Now wasn't that hard luck on poor Noel, who was thoroughly winded, and could hardly walk, let alone run? So he was the last to take his place round the tea-table, which he was delighted to see laden with good things.

Lizzie the housemaid had only stayed to pour out first cups of tea, and then left them alone in their glory to enjoy themselves. Queen Corn-hair sat behind the teapot,

beaming, whilst Chief Putting-out-Fire found her the biggest strawberries, and smothered them with a royal portion of cream and sugar.

I can't tell you half the nice things there were for tea, but I am sure it would make the mouths of any tribe of Choctaw Indians water. Even Noel was satisfied, and declared he had the right to eat after the way he had been raced about. The others were very kind to him, popping one cake after another on his plate, just to see, *I* believe, how much he could eat.

"If Noel bursts, what sh—shall we d—do with him?" asked Raymond Heath, who stuttered a little.

Jack eyed Noel carefully. "Well, we wouldn't throw him away," he said; "he'd do to practise real scalping on."

"We ought to call him 'Brave Fill-himself-tight'," laughed Geoff. "Won't you have one more cream puff, old boy?"

Noel nodded. "You don't understand," he replied. "I really am a genius, and

brain takes a lot of feeding," and he helped himself to *two* puffs.

After tea it was discovered that it was raining fast.

"We don't have to go home till seven," said Geoff cheerfully, "Mr. Ballaway said so. Let's have hide-and-seek indoors."

This was quite a good idea, though hide-and-seek soon drifted into "Red Indians", which, as Rosebell said, was a sort of hide-and-seek, only more thrilling. The Blackfeet were one tribe, and Choctaws the other. In course of the game Blackfoot Raymond Heath was captured by the Choctaws and put into prison on the roof, with the threat of being killed at dawn when a nice enough torture could be settled on. The stair to the roof was guarded by Choctaw Geoff—a chief in his own right—so it fell to the glorious lot of Blackfoot Jack to rescue his follower.

They were all so excited by this time that I am afraid they forgot about Mr. Ballaway's injunctions, and felt themselves

to be real Red Indians on the war-path. At least I am sure that was the way Jack felt, or he would never have been so foolish as to attempt what he did.

"Old Shot-in-the-Eye (Raymond) must be saved," said he. "Guard the passages, my braves, whilst I reach the roof," and he flung open the window.

Queen Corn-hair gave a cry of horror and ran to him, but she was too late. Jack was already out of the window, swarming up a piece of piping like a veritable monkey.

Mr. Ballaway and a friend, returning from the town, heard Rosebell's voice and looked up. Mr. Ballaway echoed the child's cry of horror.

"He'll be killed," he said. "Great Scott! the boy is mad."

His friend laid a restraining hand on the elder man's arm. "Don't call out," he urged, "or the lad will fall. He must be own cousin to the monkeys to grip on like that."

In horror the two gentlemen watched the perilous ascent. It seemed as if Jack must

fall and be killed—one false step and it would be all up with him! He would never be able to clamber along the sloping side of the roof.

The sweat gathered on Mr. Ballaway's forehead. Every second he expected to see a small bundle of a figure come crashing to the ground.

"He must be cat or monkey more than boy," repeated his friend. "See, he's over, safe on to the ledge."

"Thank Heaven!" sighed Mr. Ballaway. "But I'm going to put a stop to this: my nerves won't stand it!"—and he went marching into the house and upstairs, arriving in time to witness the desperate stand of the Choctaws, who were utterly taken aback when the liberated Shot-in-the-Eye came bouncing down the roof-staircase, unbound and free, with Chief Putting-out-Fire behind him, charging upon unsuspecting enemies, whilst the two remaining Blackfeet came yelling up the passage.

It was a *great* pity Mr. Ballaway found it necessary to stop this delightful play, but it happened to be just on seven o'clock, though the visitors had thought it could not yet be six! Jack listened open-mouthed to the lecture about risking his life by so foolhardy a climb.

"But I've often climbed worse places in Canada," he said. "You should see White Bird's Gully."

"I don't want to see any gullies," said Mr. Ballaway rather testily, "and I don't want to see any broken-up boys on my road down there. It was a very thoughtless act, and you must remember, my boy, to think of other people's feelings as well as your own skill as climber—or anything else. Another boy, who has *not* been out in Canada, might have followed your example and been killed."

Jack was really ashamed. He had not thought of this, and he frankly told Mr. Ballaway how sorry he was. The kind old gentleman was pleased with the apology,

and the way in which his lecture had been taken. No sulks, no pouts, but a clearly-spoken "I am sorry". He shook hands with Chief Putting-out-Fire heartily.

"That's right," he said. "Think a little more—think first, too, and act after—then your father will have cause to be proud of you."

But Jack's lips quivered as he turned away. Already he had learned how hard it was to have no one, to whom he really belonged, to be either proud or sorry over what he did. Yet—perhaps Father *did* know after all—and understood just how his lonely little son felt.

Things seemed a little flat after the great bazaar and all the fame of the scalp dance. To be quite honest, Jack was *not* clever at his books, and the discipline of school was irksome to him. He was longing for the holidays, and it is not a very good plan to be thinking all the time of holidays during term. Jack often had to remain behind the others, and even go

several times without his dinner whilst he learned his returned lessons.

"Beastly old lessons!" he called them, and would often argue foolishly to Geoff that he didn't see the good of them. He was certain neither Silas nor Tom Thumb knew the Rule of Three, and they were none the less jolly for their ignorance.

Rosebell listened to these grumbles too, and shook her curly head. "But you don't want to be just like Silas and Tom Thumb," she argued. "You told me yourself they could hardly read a letter."

"Oh, I don't mean exactly that," sighed Jack. "But I don't see the use of knowing the name of King Henry VIII's wives, or who Perkin Warbeck was. I told Mr. Oundel that Warbeck was a silly duffer, when he asked me in class last week, and I had to learn an extra history lesson for punishment. I *hate* lessons."

"So do I," replied Rosebell; "but it doesn't make them easier to be always thinking how we hate them, and there must be

some reason for having to learn the stodgy things like dates and heights of mountains, or we shouldn't be made to addle our brains with them. I s'pose it's good for our memories, at least Miss Firsall says so."

"I could remember millions of other things much more useful," lamented Jack. "I wish we could choose our own lessons. I should choose experiments and Natural History. What would you?"

"Cooking and—and Red Indian history and gymnasium," replied Rosebell promptly. "And *never* grammar or spelling, or sewing, or—oh! lots of other horrid things. I must go to my sewing now, bother it! Are you going down to the shed?"

"Yes, I've some carpentering to do. Come too when you've finished."

They were great chums, Rosebell and Jack—still *almost* better chums than Jack and Geoff. The latter played their games together, but they did not share confidences in the same way that Rosebell and Jack

did. As for Helen—poor Helen!—she still had to be content with Cecilia and playing at being "grown up". That was perhaps why Helen was beginning to miss Mother even more than the others. Jack was surprised that day, on his way by a short cut down to the shed, to find Helen in tears as she sat idly in the swing.

Helen in tears! This was new. Rosebell often cried, but never Helen. Jack stopped short in dismay.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

Helen shook her head and began to mop her eyes. She was actually glad Jack had caught her crying, for she felt so desperately in need of someone to talk to.

"No, I'm not hurt," she sobbed; "it's Mother."

Jack had heard so much of the mother whom her children so adored that he felt he knew and loved her quite well.

"She's not *worse*, is she?" he asked.

"No," said Helen tragically. "She's better—that's just it."

Jack was puzzled. "But aren't you pleased she is better?" he asked.

"Of course I am, but—but it seems so dreadful. If—if only this was a bracing place, Mother could come h—home to l—live, and we should all be ever so happy; but the doctors say it would make her ill again to come back here, and——"

"And you can't afford to leave here? Yes, I understood that," said Jack slowly. "Oh, Helen, I am so sorry. Would it make any difference if I went away? I must be an expense. I—I am afraid I cost a lot."

"Oh no!" said Helen hastily, "that's nonsense. You don't really cost enough to count. I mean your going or staying would not make any difference to Mother coming home. Father has been talking to me about things. You see *I* am the eldest, and I understand. Lucy is going to another place, and so there will only be Ann and Cook and Nanna, and I am going to help with dusting my room and

mending; there is such a lot of mending to do every week."

She was beginning to talk in her superior way again, but Jack did not notice it, he was far too concerned about Helen's news. It was all very well for her to say he did not make a real difference, but of course he must — there was his schooling, his clothing, his feeding, everything; and Dad had only sent a little money by Silas, just fifty pounds. Fifty pounds would not pay for things longer than six months, or, at most, a year. What *should* he do?

As a start, Jack resolved not to eat so much. He had a healthy appetite, and was always "hungry as a hunter" for meals. The consequence was, that having said "No, thank you" three times running at dinner-time next day, Dr. Orsdale looked at him curiously.

"What's wrong, Jack?" he asked kindly. "Not hungry to-day, eh? Too many lessons, I suppose."

Jack's lessons were beginning to be a family joke.

Jack blushed to the roots of his hair.

"I don't think it's lessons," he said.

"Not lessons? Then I'm sure you have room for some more ground-rice shape. I thought it was a favourite of yours."

Jack shook his head. "No, thank you, sir," he repeated; and the doctor said no more, for he saw something was wrong. But later he called the boy to his study, and asked him what was the matter. Jack could not conceal the truth, though he tried hard not to let Dr. Orsdale see how he felt his position. The doctor listened and understood.

"Helen should not have spoken about what I told her," he said. "And you, my dear boy, are not to worry your head about being an expense. The money your father sent will more than pay for your education and keep for a year, and by that time I may myself be better off. No need to meet trouble half-way, Jack; and I am glad of

this chance of telling you how pleased I have been with the way you have tried to do as you ought. It must be very hard to fit yourself to English household life after the freedom of the camp, but you have done well. Now run off and play, and don't let me hear any more "no thank you's" at dinner-time."

Jack did run off, ready for his game; but all the same he could not forget the cause of Helen's tears, and showed himself very thoughtful in "helping" in many little ways. But alas! boys will be boys, and Jack could not change his nature, or his wild hawk ways to the quiet ones of such pattern boys as Leonard Broughton.

Leonard was *quite* a pattern—at least so his mother said, though I don't know whether Mr. Firley, the schoolmaster, agreed. Not that Leonard ever gave trouble in class by playing mischievous pranks, but he had been known on more than one occasion to "sneak"—and I think Mr. Firley disliked sneaking as

much as any of the boys themselves. Jack Wymond was not a bit of a sneak, but he was a terrible fidget. Never did boy find it so very easy to have his mind distracted from his lessons. If a wasp buzzed, Jack's bright eyes were round in a second; if a slate-pencil squeaked, he was peeping and prying to find out where the sound came from. If a window needed opening, Jack was the first to jump up to do it; in fact, he was all agog to do anything or attend to anything—excepting lessons. It was not that he was stupid, but he would not give attention; and Mr. Byles, the thin young English master, would groan over this tiresome pupil, whose copy-books were decorated by really clever little drawings of "camp scenes", which would call for titters from the boys in class as they were passed secretly round for admiration. Thus Jack had to learn an extra chapter of history for drawing the negress Dinah beating Tom Thumb over the head with a frying-pan, and write out a whole page of analysis

for the sin of drawing a caricature of Mr. Byles dancing a "harvest dance" with Red Axe and other befeathered Indians.

It was just a fortnight after Jack had resolved to be even more of a pattern than Leonard himself that Mr. Byles, casting a stern glance round his class, allowed his eye to rest on Jack, who looked as good as gold. But Mr. Byles knew enough about boys to be suspicious, for all the other boys were grinning—except Leonard, who sat next to Geoff Orsdale.

"What have you got under your jersey, Wymond?" asked Mr. Byles, frowning. Jack's blue jersey bulged oddly over his chest.

"A box, sir," said Jack promptly.

"That is not the right place for a box; put it on the table."

Jack obeyed; and Geoff leaned back in his chair, stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth—to check his laughter.

"What is in the box?" went on Mr. Byles suspiciously.

Jack hesitated. "Please, sir, I would rather not say," he replied.

"I insist on being told. Open the box at once."

Jack obeyed with prompt alacrity, and instantly the class-room table was swarming with spiders. Big spiders, little ones, black spiders, grey ones, spiders which came marching along on long thin legs, spiders that went scuttling away in a panic as if they wanted to find a safe hiding-place.

The class-room was in an uproar. The boys jumped up from their places, some laughing, others shouting, some pretending to be afraid, others trying to catch the escaping insects.

"It's my spider collection," explained Jack sweetly; "I've forty different kinds. May I put them back, sir, if you've done looking at them?"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Byles. "This is a gross breach of discipline. I shall report it to the head master. Wymond,

you will remain behind when the class is over. Boys, return to your places at once. Wymond, co—collect those insects."

The last command was easier said than done, for the spiders had not waited to be "collected". They were everywhere! Even Mr. Byles shook himself, re-arranged his tie, and felt nervously about his collar. He knew quite well how pleased those wretched boys would be if a spider ran down his neck.

Spider-hunting is much more exciting and interesting than English History, and those spiders took at least an hour to catch. Philips minor had one down his back; Rogers senior had seen one escape up his sleeve, and "felt it tickling him everywhere"; Haines was half afraid one had got into his ear and made his head buzz.

"Duffer!" said Jack on hearing the last complaint; "it's only earwigs that do that!"

At last some sort of order was restored,

but not till Mr. Byles had taken—very gingerly — the reclosed box containing imprisoned spiders, and marching to the open window, flung it out.

Jack sighed.

"There were forty different kinds," he murmured.

"Orsdale, what was the date of the Battle of St. Albans?" said Mr. Byles, frowning round the reassembled class, "and whom was it fought between?"

So, till twelve o'clock, the History lesson went on, and at a quarter to one the school bell announced that it was time for the day boarders to go home to dinner.

There was, however, no dinner for Jack that day. He had to sit and write out:

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day"

six times, and as this could not be finished in the dinner hour he had to remain and write it over for the last three times after four o'clock. Mr. Byles was resolved to have no more spider jokes in class.

Poor Jack! He was very disgusted at having to remain behind this second time. Dr. Orsdale would be sure to ask what he had been doing, and he would think he was not trying to improve. Somehow it seems such bad luck when one naughtiness undoes all the hard weeks of trying. Jack felt quite glum and enormously hungry by the time he had finished his last copy of Gray's "Elegy", and, having apologized to Mr. Byles, set out for home. If he ran he would still be in time for tea, and he would take the short cut across the lane.

More haste less speed! Jack was scampering along with his head down, and so failed to notice the man who stepped out from his place under the hedge across his path.

"Why, lad!"

Strong arms had caught Jack, bringing him to a swift halt.

Jack gave a queer little cry, and stood still, looking up into the man's face.

"Nick Maslen!" he whispered, "Nick ——"

The man smiled. "Same old Nick," he replied. "But I hardly knew you, lad. *Jack Wymond.* Yes, it's the Kipper right enough, though the tang of the old camp's gone. The Kipper! Snakes, what times we all had, eh? And it's the same old place still, though Dinah fights daily now with Tom Thumb."

"And you're in England," stammered Jack, whilst a hundred memories of the wild life near White Bear Lake came rushing back to him. "How's that?"

"Luck," replied the other. "An old granfer died, and seems to have forgotten old grudges in pegging out. I've got a place of my own up in the north, and a tidy income. No more camp life for dis chile, unless I get sick of best behaviour again and go back to the old pals."

Jack still stared. Nick always had been called "Gentleman Nick" out at the camp, and the boys had shown some curiosity about the chap who never spoke of his past. And now Gentleman Nick had re-

turned to England, having come into some sort of fortune, though as yet he was still in his old rough clothes and wore his short thick beard.

"But why," asked Jack, "have you come here? Have you a message for me from the boys?"

Nick smiled.

"Yes," he replied, "a very particular message—the queerest, I guess, that I ever carried. It's from a man who came over in the boat with me, named Jake Harrell. Do you remember him?"

Jack's hands clenched.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I remember him very well. He—he went out with my father the last expedition they took before he—my father—died. I remember Jake Harrell quite well."

"And it was old Jake," said Nick Maslen, "who sent me along this way with a private message for you."

CHAPTER IX

Where was Jack?

Tea had been over nearly an hour when Jack got home that evening. Rosebell and Geoff were on the look-out for him.

"You must be hungry, you poor Jack," said Rosebell. "What a shame! I was sorry," but a dimple lurked in the corner of her rosy cheek. "When Ann heard about the spiders," she added, "she nearly had a fit. She said you deserved not to have any dinner for a week. But Ann is out this evening, and I'll go and get you something to eat from Cook."

Jack laughed. "I'm not really hungry," he said.

What *was* the matter with Jack this evening? He did not look a bit like a boy who has been writing all day long

about the curfew bell tolling. His cheeks were burning, his eyes shining, his whole manner that of one who has just heard an exciting secret or made a wonderful discovery.

"Not *hungry*!" cried Geoff and Rosebell; "but you've had nothing to eat since breakfast."

Jack shook his head, running his fingers through his short curls.

"Perhaps I am then," he said. "I ought to be starved, oughtn't I? Only——"

"I'll go and fetch some cake and bread and butter," said Rosebell, "and p'raps Cook will let me have some milk. I'm sure she won't make you tea."

"I don't want any," said Jack. "I don't really want anything," and he jumped up, moving restlessly round the room.

"What's the matter?" asked Geoff. "Do sit down and talk to me. We've not finished planning about Saturday yet."

They had arranged to have a great "Indian camping" on Saturday, and some of

the boys from school were coming to join the fun, each bringing his own provisions. They were to form two tribes, as they had at Mr. Ballaway's, and there were to be battles, and big-game shooting, and Indian cooking—in fact all the sort of fun boys and girls enjoy.

Jack and Geoff were to be rival chiefs, so they had a great many plans to make.

But this evening Jack's wits were all wool-gathering, and Geoff gave up planning in disgust. What *was* wrong with Jack? He was not in the sulks, not even in a bad temper, but he was not a bit his usual merry self.

Rosebell returned in triumph with a tea-tray laden with bread, butter, jam, and milk. "There's no cake," she said; "at least Cook wouldn't let me have it. Oh dear! I *do* dislike being poor. Helen is talking to Dad again. I believe it is about expenses—that awful word! I wish I could earn a lot of money."

Jack did not answer. He had found his

appetite now, and was eating as if he had been starved, which was nearly the case.

"I think I shall go to bed early," said he; "I'm tired. I suppose the curfew is tolling somewhere in my head. How I do hate lessons! and how surprised Mr. Byles will be when——" He checked himself, and went off whistling, followed by Jiggles. Jiggles had *two* masters now —Jack and Geoff, and it would have been hard to say which he loved most. Geoff watched Jiggles desert him this evening, and felt vexed.

It was not fair of Jack to steal Jiggles' affection from him. In fact, Jack was tiresome—awfully tiresome; he almost wished he were not here. They had got on very well without him, and Nanna had been saying again this evening that, whatever her master said, Jack was a *lot* of extra expense.

Geoff would never have thought of this had Jiggles remained by his side; but if

you really could have gone to the root of the matter, the fact was that Geoff himself was in a bad temper. He had wanted Jack to plan about Saturday, and instead Jack had gone to bed. It would have been nice to feel that Jack's advice did not count, but it *did*. Jack knew exactly how this ripping game ought to be played, and they wanted to make it as real as possible.

Rosebell was reading a book, curled up by the window. She did not take any notice of Geoff's grumps, but she could not help wondering what was the matter with Jack, he had seemed so strange. Did he want any comforting after the long day of punishment? It must have been nasty to go without dinner and tea; she wished she could tell him she was sorry.

Rosebell had so many wishes on the subject that she was reading her book upside down, and went to sleep in the middle of plans to be extra kind to Jack next day.

Rosebell was not at all a lazy-bones in

the morning. She liked to be up and out in the garden. All the children had gardens of their own. Helen's was the picture of neatness and prettiness, for Helen never forgot to water her flowers properly and plant them carefully. Her row of marigolds was beautifully straight, her sweet-williams making a nice background. Rosebell's garden was always higgledy-piggledy, and she hardly waited for her flowers to come out before she wanted to pick them to give away. Jack and Geoff were neither of them good gardeners, and they preferred radishes and mustard and cress to flowers; but Jack liked gardening in his own fashion, and usually spent the hour before breakfast with Rosebell in their special plots.

To-day, however, no Jack appeared, though he had said yesterday morning he meant to be very busy with a new idea for growing mustard and cress on pieces of blanket nailed round his plot.

Rosebell had been very curious to see how this was going to act, and went pre-

sently to call up to Jack and ask why he did not come.

"I've got your bits of blanket, Ja—ack," she called.

No answer! Yet Jack's window was wide open, and he was a light sleeper.

Since it was no use calling, Rosebell went back to her work. She had promised Dad to weed *his* paths to-day, as there had been some heavy showers, and the weeds were easier to pull up.

Rosebell sighed over her task; she was thinking about Mother. The six months were up now, and the time to which they had all looked forward so much had come. But Mother was not home—perhaps would not be able to come home for a long time; or, worse still, if she had to she would be very, very ill.

The breakfast bell sounded, and the little girl ran indoors.

"Where's Jack?" asked Dad. "This is the third meal he has been absent from. He will soon be starving."

"He didn't come gardening this morning," said Rosebell. "I think the curfew bell must have made him very sleepy. I'll run up and call him."

Rosebell was always the one to run on errands, and I am afraid her eagerness to do so made the others lazy.

"No," said Dad; "Geoff can go. See what has made him late, Geoff; it is very unlike Jack."

Geoff was soon back, his rosy face quite pale. He held a note in his hand.

"Jack's not there," he said; "and his bed has not been slept in. This is a letter for you, Dad."

Even Helen let the urn tap run on and flood the tea-tray in her anxiety to hear what was in that letter. Rosebell just sat with eyes and mouth wide open, too astonished to believe what Geoff had said.

Jack *must* be there; perhaps he had been so sleepy last night he had rolled under the bed whilst saying his prayers. Rosebell

had a quick imagination! But what about the letter Dad was reading.

"W—what does Jack say?" stammered Geoff, who felt somehow guilty. Had Jack noticed how grumpy he was last night about Jiggles following him upstairs? Jiggles had been found by his master, later, curled up asleep on his own bed. Jack must have sent him back, then, when he got upstairs. When we know we have been having unkind thoughts like this about people, we always do feel guilty when anything unexpected happens to them.

"I will read you Jack's letter," said Dr. Orsdale in rather husky tones; "this is what he says: 'Dear Dr. Orsdale, You won't be able to understand why I am going away like this, but it is the only way in which I can pay you back for all your goodness to me. I know I have been a great expense, and that I have cost more than the money Silas brought. Please forgive me. I'd like to be able to thank

you all properly one day for your care and goodness. I'm not clever at letters, so excuse all my mistakes please.

"'Your affectionate Jack.'"

There were a great many mistakes in the spelling, and the pencil seemed to have been put very often in Jack's mouth to make it mark clearly, but Dr. Orsdale did not comment on this. He read the letter very slowly, then folded it up and put it in his pocket. None of the children spoke, but big tears were rolling down Rosebell's cheeks.

Helen was the first to break the silence.

"I never meant him to feel like that," she said, "when I—I talked about Mother not being able to come home, and having to be very economical."

"He'll have to come back," went on Geoff, hacking viciously at a piece of hard crust. "We'll have to fetch him back at once."

Rosebell gave a big sob. "Dear, dear

Jack," she whispered; "he's all alone—and sad."

Dr. Orsdale got up from his chair. He looked dreadfully worried.

"I must call in at the police station," said he, "and see the inspector. Jack cannot have gone far, and I really do not understand his letter. I shall not be surprised if he comes back later in the day."

"I needn't go to school, Dad?" pleaded Geoff. "I can stay and look for him, can't I? He is most likely in the woods. He often said if people only understood more about herbs and berries they could live in a wood a long time."

Dr. Orsdale was too anxious to be amused. "Of course you must go to school, Geoff," he replied sharply. "No doubt the police will soon find Jack, who cannot go far as he had no money. But I cannot help feeling disappointed in all of you. Jack would not have run away so foolishly if you had done what I asked you when he came."

When Dad had gone the children sat looking at each other.

"He means our job," said Geoff. "And —and he's quite right—at least as far as I'm concerned. I haven't bothered a bit to *help* Jack, even though we have been chums lately."

"Of course *I've* not seen much of him," said Helen, who always liked to make excuses for herself, "but I'm sorry I spoke about expenses. Jack has such a queer temper and twists things round so. I expect all the time he was longing to get back to the camp. We shall never see him again."

Rosebell burst into tears and ran out of the room.

Geoff looked after his younger sister wistfully.

"There's no need for *her* to cry," he said. "She was the only one of us who did do her job. I think it was pretty beastly of Jack to go off like that, without saying a word to her."

"He got tired," said Helen, "and bored. He might have stayed if we had been rich, but he didn't like it when we were in trouble. He'll go back to the camp and grow up into a regular Red Indian."

"I don't *think* that's fair," replied Geoff slowly. "I'm sure it isn't fair. What made you say it, Helen?"

But Helen was already ashamed of her unkind speech, and turned away.

"Anyhow he's gone," she said, "and he won't come back. Ann and Nanna will be delighted, and we shan't have any more fusses."

Geoff was left alone to get his school-books and set off for school. How lonely he felt! Jack was such a cheery comrade, and always chattered on the way to school. Geoff trudged slowly along, feeling hot, tired, dull. His conscience was pricking him in what he called a very unfair way. It was not *his* fault that Jack had gone away. Possibly Helen was right, and Jack had gone because they were poorer, and all

so sad that Mother could not come home. Anyhow, if Jack had gone back to the camp in Temagnani he was to be envied—not pitied. If it were not for everyone at home, Geoff himself would have loved to go out with Jack, and live in those queer black shanties with Red Axe, Tom Thumb, and the rest. What heaps of nuggets *he* would find! And when his pockets were full he would come home and buy Dad a new practice in a beautiful bracing place where Mother would be perfectly well, and they would all "live happily ever after".

Geoff was so busy planning about those nuggets he was so sure he should find if *only* he could go to Canada, that he was late for school. Mr. Byles seemed quite concerned when he heard about Jack. Perhaps he thought the latter's running away had something to do with too much Gray's "Elegy", and he told Geoff he very much hoped his friend would soon be found.

Geoff hoped so too. He was hoping it

a great deal more than he should have believed possible. He had often said to himself he wished Jack had never come, but that was only when Jack annoyed him. Now he understood what a really good chum Jack was, and what fun they had had together. There would be no grand Indian camping on Saturday unless Jack were found — and probably by Saturday Jack would be on his way back to a real camp.

Again Geoff felt a little twinge of envy. He did not blame Jack! He thought the camp must be much nicer than England. Perhaps Jack would shoot a bear, and have real thrilling adventures with Red Indians. If only they could have gone together——

It was Geoff whose thoughts went woolgathering to-day. He was picturing the delight of Tom Thumb, and Silas, and Red Axe at getting the "Kipper" back again, and the fun Jack-the-Kipper would have in that wild life; so he found parsing

and Latin very dull jobs in comparison. He had two returned lessons, and went home feeling very ill-used.

"I wish we all lived in Temagnani," he thought as he trudged back.

Rosebell was watching for him.

"No news of Jack," she sighed, "excepting that a boy like him was seen with a man going along the Horsten road last night about eleven o'clock. So he must have left the house soon after Dad came to bed."

"With a man?" asked Geoff. "Perhaps Silas came for him. I don't know, Rosebell, that Jack isn't very lucky. White Bear Lake must be nicer than this."

Helen overheard this last remark as she came in.

"*I* agree with Nanna," she said, "that Jack has behaved horribly ungratefully after all our kindness, and then to run away when we were in trouble."

Rosebell tossed her curly head. "*I* don't think Jack ungrateful one bit," she

replied. "And I don't believe we were nearly as kind as we might have been. *Poor* Jack—all alone in the world!"

And Helen had nothing to say in reply —perhaps she knew Rosebell was quite right.

CHAPTER X

Jack comes Home

Things don't often happen as we expect. Geoff was quite positive certain that Jack had returned to Canada with the mysterious man, about whom the police had learned enough to know that he was a stranger from Canada, who had called in at several neighbouring public houses the day before Jack's disappearance, and had made enquiries as to where Dr. Orsdale lived.

I think everyone was inclined to agree with Geoff, though Dr. Orsdale was very puzzled over the business, for *why* should any of the men from the lumber camp in Temagnani want a boy like Jack back with them?

Why? Why? Why? Lots of questions and no answer!

Rosebell spent all *her* spare time in searching their special haunts in the woods and hollows. She did not believe Jack had gone right away; indeed she felt sure he would not return to the camp, as he knew it was against his father's wishes that he should be there.

No one knew as well as Rosebell how dearly Jack had loved his father, and she was sure he would want to do as he had wished. So the little girl stole off day after day, the woods echoing with her soft calls for "Jack, Jack, Jack".

Geoff did not join in these searches. He was actually inclined to take sides with Helen in calling Jack ungrateful, but this was because Geoff was very cross at Jack's going. Jack was a good sport, and he had such a lot of *ideas* about playing games. Other boys were muffs in comparison. Besides, it is horrid to feel we have failed in anything, and Geoff was quite aware that he had failed in his share of the job Dad had given. He had been

selfish — only caring about how much pleasure Jack's company could give *him*, and not at all wishing to "give up" or take pains in helping Jack to find pleasure and profit in his company. It is so easy to do this in making friends, but it is a very bad practice. We ought not to want friends just for the pleasure they give us, but to *give* pleasure and help to them. We are too fond of taking and wanting, instead of loving to give and help. This had been Geoff's mistake, and he was beginning to understand it—but at the beginning those tiresome conscience pricks made him only more cross with Jack.

So Rosebell searched the woods alone, whilst Geoff and Helen called her a little goose to waste her time, since Jack was nearly back at his beloved camp by now, and would be able to be as much of a Red Indian as he wished.

"It's no use to talk like that, Geoff," said honest Rosebell, "as if you didn't care two pins. I love Jack, and I believe

you do really; and we know he loved us, so he won't *want* to go away for ever and be a Red Indian or one of the 'boys'."

"I don't know," grumped Geoff. "Everyone is stupid, and you are the stupidest of all, Rosebell."

Have you ever felt like that? I believe everyone has. And because Rosebell quite understood what the feeling was like, she went off to the woods again, just for one more hunt.

"I'm sure if Jack is living on herbs and berries he must be awfully empty inside," she sighed, "or he may have *poisoned* himself. My poor, darling Jack!"

And she called quite loud, frightened by her own suggestion: "Jack! Jack! Jack!"

And who do you think answered her? Why! Jack himself! Rosebell gave the gladdest little cry when she saw him, and ran to meet him with her arms wide open.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, "I knew you wouldn't go back to the camp."

Jack had his arms open too, and they

hugged each other. They *were* excited; and when they had finished hugging—as if they had been away from each other for a year instead of a week—Jack took Rosebell round the waist, and danced her up the glade and down again, in spite of July heat.

"Oh, Rosebell," cried Jack, "I *am* so glad to see you, and you were glad to see me!"

His eyes shone with delight. Rosebell, rather breathless, pulled him down on to the bank beside her.

"I'm going to give you the dreadfullest scolding," she said. "Why *did* you go away?"

"I must see the doctor first," replied Jack, jigging in restless joy.

Rosebell's happy face clouded.

"He's up in London. He won't be back till the day after to-morrow. Oh, Jack, I'm bursting to know where you've been, and all about it!"

Jack shook his head. "I *am* disap-

pointed about the doctor," he said. "It will be awfully hard to wait till the day after to-morrow, but it must be done. I can't tell any of you anything till I have seen the doctor."

Rosebell was dreadfully disappointed, for she was just as curious as you or I would have been. Jack looked so happy, so pleased with himself, that he must have nice news of some sort; but she did not try to coax him to tell her—she knew Jack too well. When he had made up his mind he did not often unmake it, so she said: "Come in and see the others, they *will* be glad you have not gone to Canada."

"Did they think I had gone?" asked Jack. "Why?"

Rosebell hesitated. "There didn't seem anywhere else for you to have gone," she replied; "and the police said someone had seen you with a man along the Horsten road. It is dreadfully muddling."

"But you were calling me," said Jack; "that's the funniest thing of all. I heard

you as I came up the glade. I knew it was your voice."

Rosebell flushed. "I was so afraid you were living in the woods like a Red Indian," she said, "with nothing to eat but berries and herbs. I always brought some chocolate in my pocket in case you were hungry, those nice big penny bars of Cadbury's." She dived into her pocket and brought out some rather worse-for-wear slabs of chocolate.

Jack knew quite well how few pennies Rosebell had to spend on sweets, and how fond she was of them herself, and tears came into his eyes at sight of those shabby slabs.

"That's just *you*, Rosebell," he said. "No one else would have thought of it."

"Oh, I expect they would," she replied, delighted to see him begin to munch away at her gift; "I'm sure they would."

"No, they wouldn't; that's what makes you different from all the rest. That's what makes you the only one I want to

tell my secrets to. You care for me. I believe you love me almost the same as if I were your brother."

Rosebell put both grubby little hands into his.

"I do *really*, Jack," she replied. "It's just the same as having two brothers, and I cried for myself as well as you when I found you'd gone away. I cried because I wanted you."

How Jack's eyes shone! Only those who have "no one really belonging to them" can quite understand how grateful he was to Rosebell for her words, and how he loved her in return.

"Dear Rosebell," he said, "after Dr. Orsdale you shall be the first to hear my news, and if it is all right you shall be the one to tell Geoff and Helen."

He had been looking forward to telling Geoff his secret himself, but he felt he would rather Rosebell had the pleasure.

"I'm going to tell them you've come back *now*," she laughed, patting his knee.

"You wait here and finish the chocolate. Have you had any dinner to-day?"

"I had two Bath buns at the station, but I was in such a hurry to get back. If *only* the doctor were here! The day after to-morrow seems such a long way off."

So it did to Rosebell, but she did not say so. She scampered off to the house, where she found Helen and Geoff writing their weekly letter to Mother—Rosebell's had been written before breakfast.

"Jack's back," she panted, flinging herself down on to the couch and fanning herself with her sailor hat. "He's in the wood down there at the bottom of the garden."

"Indeed!" said Helen, who had made a big blot right in the middle of a last page. "Very kind of Jack to honour us again. I suppose he thought it wouldn't be so very fine to go out and rough it again."

"If only we'd known he was coming,"

grumbled Geoff, "we might have had our Indian camping after all. What does he say, Rose? Why did he go? Is he sorry about giving Dad so much worry? Why didn't he come with you?"

Rosebell's lips quivered. She was *glad* Jack had waited in the wood.

"You're not a bit nice, not either of you," she said. "Jack has been away about a secret. I'm sure it's a nice one, but he won't tell anyone before he tells Dad, and he'll be dreadfully hurt if you are both grumpy to him. Aren't you going to be nice and *help* Jack? When you thought he had run away you were sorry we had not done our job better, and now he is back you are grumpy."

"I'm not a bit grumpy," said Helen, "but I can't help thinking Jack is a silly boy. I must go and tell Ann he is back."

"Geoff," pleaded Rosebell, "do be *very* nice to Jack. I'm sure you'll be sorry if you are not. He's so—so—I

don't know the word, but if you're the least little bit stiff he'll notice it."

"Oh, I'm not going to be stiff," said Geoff carelessly. "Come on, we'll go and find him. I want to plan that camping game if we can, after all; the other chaps were ever so keen on it."

Rosebell sighed. She knew Geoff put on this "prickly hedgehog" manner when he did not want anyone to talk about what he did not choose to listen to. Geoff was not *really* so selfish as his words implied, but, having sided with Helen in calling Jack ungrateful, he did not like to be too gushing now his much-missed companion was back again.

"Come on," he repeated; "I'll race you to the wood."

The race had a good effect, for both children were so hot when they reached Jack's waiting place that it was quite impossible for anyone to be stiff. But Jack knew only too well that Geoff's welcome was not the same as Rosebell's.

Geoff did not ask where Jack had been, but plunged at once into talk about the camping game. Jack hesitated at first, but presently joined in; it was easier not to take any notice of what had happened.

"We'll have a topping time," said Geoff. "You shall be the Choctaw leader and I'll be the Algonquin one; we won't have Blackfeet."

"We'd better not give Noel Jeryl charge of the provisions," laughed Rosebell, "or we shall all be hungry. Oh, Jack, I was forgetting about your being hungry, and it must be nearly tea-time. I'm thirsty; aren't you?"

Jack was very thirsty, and the three children went more slowly together up the garden path. Helen shook hands gravely with Jack.

"Dad won't be home till Saturday evening," said she; "he's been awfully worried about you. We thought you'd gone back to Canada. Didn't one of the men from that awful camp come to see you?"

Rosebell was on thorns during this speech, fearing Jack would flare up, and perhaps go right away again; but to her surprise he answered quite quietly: "Yes, it was Gentleman Nick, one of the boys. I never meant to go back to Canada; only, I wrote in a hurry, and I don't think I made my meaning very clear."

"I don't think you did," said Helen.

Tea was not a bit *jolly*; there was that tiresome little stiffness over the children which we all know so well by experience, when "everyone is not quite friends with everyone". Helen was quite kind in wanting Jack to eat a big tea; but he was made well aware that she at least thought he had been naughty, and was in a kind of disgrace. Rosebell sat next to Jack, and kept slipping down a hot, sticky hand to squeeze his under the table, whilst Geoff talked a very great deal more than there was any need of, about the fun they were going to have on Saturday.

"I don't think it is the time to have

fun," said Helen, "with Mother away ill, and Dad so worried."

Geoff was silent after this, but he only laughed at Rosebell when she asked after tea whether he thought they ought not to play their game.

"Dad wouldn't expect us all to mope," he said; "we can be as sorry as sorry can be, and still enjoy fun. Helen is going out to tea with Cecilia, so she isn't practising what she preaches.'

Jack had so many moods that Rosebell often got bewildered at his quick changes from one to another. He had, she guessed, been sad at Geoff's welcome to him; yet by the time Saturday dawned he was in the gayest, wildest spirits.

"The doctor comes home to-day," he whispered to his little friend, "*that's* why I'm excited. Then you shall tell the others my secret."

"It's the awfullest, difficultest one to guess!" sighed Rosebell. "Even Geoff

says he can't imagine a bit what it is, and he's good at riddles as a rule."

Indeed, Helen and Geoff were much more curious than they confessed about Jack's whereabouts during those days when he had been missing.

"He must have been with friends," said Helen to her brother, "for he must have had food and lodgings, and he had no money at all. I can't understand about it a bit."

"He was with Gentleman Nick—he said so," replied Geoff; "but what did Gentleman Nick want with him, and who is he, I wonder?"

They were left to wonder, however, for never a word would Jack breathe.

Saturday was one of the hottest days of a hot summer, the sort of day in which only salamanders and children can be brisk. The very idea of Red Indians made elders hot. Helen, dressed in coolest muslin, set out to spend her afternoon with dearest Cecilia, looking in pitying indulgence at

Rosebell, who was busy sticking lots of brown feathers in her curly mop.

"One of you will probably get sunstroke," said Helen. "You had much better think of a quiet game."

"There aren't many nice outdoor quiet games," replied Rosebell; "and we shall be in the woods, so we can't get sunstroke."

Geoff was busy telling the other boys what their names were to be—Running Wolf, Red Eagle, Black Bear, the Otter, Face-in-a-Mist; they *were* a funny collection, and took quite a long time to learn. Noel Jeryl was Calf-shirt, and after all he had got the job of carrying provisions, because no one else wanted it.

Camping-grounds were chosen, fires lighted, war-dances danced, before the great business of the day was attended to. The great business, of course, meant going on the war-path. What fun it was! that creeping along amongst bracken and undergrowth, hearts beating as fast as if

real enemies were awaiting them. Then the shrill note of the battle-cry, the rush, the scramble, the squeals of delight and mirth which showed how thoroughly the fierce foes enjoyed their battling. Jack was quite as enthusiastic as Geoff, and both boys made capital leaders. In the first great battle the Choctaws were victorious, and carried home *all* the tribe of Algonquins to their wigwams, where Queen Corn-hair, as arranged, had prepared the feast and was ready to receive trophies. Such funny trophies they were!—some just tangles of dry grasses torn up with earth dangling from their roots. These were the "scalps", and Foster junior had actually cut nose and eyes in a turnip to hand her as an Algonquin head.

"You nasty boys — I mean braves!" shuddered Queen Corn-hair. "Now come to dinner. Noel Jeryl had eaten all Cawston major's tarts before he reached the camping-ground, but I rescued the rest of the things."

Some of the boys suggested that the culprit should be tied to a tree, and condemned to watch them eat whilst he starved; but Noel's fat face became so unhappy at this suggested punishment that Queen Cornhair begged him off, and both captors and captives sat down to a merry meal.

It was late when the great Indian camping was over; and Rosebell had to go in at once, as on Saturday evening she always had now to do "odd jobs" in the way of running in tapes and sewing on buttons for herself.

"Dad will be back before bedtime," she called to Jack. "I *am* excited, because now we shall know, shan't we? Aren't you longing to know, Geoff?"

Geoff was examining sundry black bruises and bumps he had suffered in the "last stand", when the enemy had overpowered them with great slaughter. He was very tired, and the bruises hurt a lot more than they had done at first.

"I can't say I am," he retorted. "Secrets

like that don't interest me." It was a cross speech, for besides being tired Geoff was feeling cross; but he was sorry he had said it when Jack turned away and went up to his own room. Of course, he was awfully interested, for he could not make a ghost of a guess as to what Jack's secret could be, or what he had been doing during that mysterious absence; but he was too proud to follow Jack and explain that he had spoken first and been sorry after. Jack was a good sort really, and all the boys had agreed that the camping game of Red Indians was the finest possible sport. He wanted to be friends with Jack, but he was always blundering.

Cart wheels sounded outside, and Geoff ran to the door. It was Dad, home again.

"Oh, Dad," cried Geoff, "how jolly to see you again! and you know Jack is home?"

Dr. Orsdale looked very pale and tired as he came into the hall.

"Yes," he replied, "I had Helen's letter

to say Jack was home—but where had he been?"

Geoff gave a shout to call Jack from his room.

"He won't tell any of us, Dad," he replied; "he wants you to know first."

And, as he spoke, Jack himself appeared at the head of the staircase.

CHAPTER XI

Jack's Secret

"What a long, long time Jack is!" said Rosebell impatiently. "I believe he has been an hour talking to Dad."

"It is past your bedtime," replied Helen. "Nanna will be vexed if you don't go up, as it makes her so late for her supper."

Rosebell would have run off at once any other day, for she did not like to vex Nanna, but really *this* time it would be quite impossible.

"Jack has promised to tell me the secret first," she said, "and I am to tell you; so if I go to bed you won't hear till the morning."

And, though Helen still declared she was not a bit curious, she said no more about Rosebell going to bed. Geoff had quite given up pretending not to be inter-

ested. He fidgeted as much as Rosebell, and both amused themselves by having four guesses each as to what the secret was.

"It is worse than the bazaar secret," laughed Rosebell; "that was only fun, but this is important. I'm sure it is, or Jack wouldn't have run away about it for days and days and days, and then taken such a long time to tell Dad."

"Perhaps Dad is lecturing him for running away," replied Geoff. "I don't see how Jack could have a really exciting secret."

"There is Jack calling you, Rosebell," said Helen, and in spite of her grown-up air she flushed and looked eager.

Rosebell simply flung herself out of the room, slipping upon the linoleum outside in her haste. Rosebell always was a "tumbler" or a "sprawler", as Geoff called her, because she became too excited to look where she was going.

"I'm here, Jack," she cried; "I'm here."

"Miss Rosebell," called Nanna from the landing above; "your bath's waiting, and it's gone half-past eight."

"I'll come directly, Nanna," gasped Rosebell; "only I must hear the secret first."

That secret was quite upsetting the household, for not only Rosebell's bath but Dad's dinner had been kept waiting for more than half an hour.

"Come to the summer-house," said Jack, and Rosebell forgot all about little things, such as baths, at sight of his face. Jack was not a bit excited in the ordinary way, but his cheeks were crimson and his eyes bright with the look people get when they have *very* good news to tell.

"Well!" said Rosebell breathlessly, as they reached the summer-house, around which evening shadows were gathering.

"Do you remember," said Jack, "my telling you of a pard of my father's called Jake Harrell?"

Rosebell nodded. "Yes, yes. He went

with your dad the last time they went pros —pros—looking for gold."

"That's it. And, Rosebell, *they found gold.*"

Rosebell looked puzzled.

"I knew Jake left the camp because he'd made his fortune; you told me that," she said. "And Silas thought your father ought to have had a bit of the fortune."

"Yes," said Jack. "And Silas was right."

"I don't understand," said Rosebell humbly. "Does it mean your father would have been rich if he hadn't died?"

"I'll tell you just what has been happening," said Jack, "all from the beginning."

And Rosebell never even *thought* of Nanna's temper or cold bath-water.

"You know the day I let out the spiders in class," began Jack, "and had to stay late to write about the curfew?"

"Yes, that was the day before you ran away."

"That's right. I didn't have to stay

really late at school, but, coming home, I met Gentleman Nick, one of the boys belonging to the camp."

"Yes."

"He had had money and a place left him by his grandfather. Coming home in the boat with him was Jake Harrell. Jake had a big fortune made too, but he was mopey, and—and he drank a lot. Before the end of the voyage, he told Nick he was ill—very ill. He asked him to see after him for a bit. Nick did so; the boys always hung together, though Jake and Nick had never been pards. When they landed at Liverpool Jake was very bad. Nick stayed till the day Jake spoke about —about my father. He told Nick it was he—Father—who had located the gold, and then gone sick. He had trusted Jake to go to the agent and put in a claim in his name as well as his own, but Jake cheated; he only put in the claim in his own name."

"Does that mean," asked Rosebell timidly, "that Jake took whole instead of

half, and the other half was really your dad's?"

"Yes. And—and when Dad died, Jake thought it was all right. He got awfully rich and left camp, but somehow he wasn't happy. He kept thinking of me. He met someone 'way down in Toronto who made him think more of me. It was, it was——"

"It was God telling him he had been wicked," said Rosebell simply.

"That was it," replied Jack. "Someone down in Toronto made him feel that too. He was real worried, and when the illness came on him at Liverpool he could only think about wanting to make it all square. So—so he sent Gentleman Nick."

"To *you*?" said Rosebell.

"Yes, to me. You can guess how I felt. Nick said to me: 'Kipper (they called me Kipper in camp), there's a sick man down in Liverpool wants to give you a fortune right now, but he has to see you first for fear I cheat him. It's all to be dark too. You're to come along without

a word to the people you're lodging with. The old man's in a tricky mood, but I think he'll play fair if you don't bustle him.' He said a lot more you wouldn't understand, about Jake's conscience, and in the end I promised to come. I didn't care so much about a fortune, Rosebell, but I knew how awfully you all wanted money for your mother's sake, and—and I just went."

"Oh, *Jack*!"

Rosebell always did understand.

Jack gave the queerest little laugh.

"One day," he said, "I'll tell you all about that journey, and—and how I felt running away like that, and knowing what everyone would be saying. I'll—I'll tell you about the funny journey down, too, and old Jake's queer ways, bellowing at the woman who was looking after him in his lodgings, and being angry at having to stay in bed. But he was good to me—straight, he was! I didn't understand all, because he kept rambling off; but he'd seen the lawyer and made over half the

claim to me. That means hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pounds a year —and he gave me a cheque for £500 as well, which he said was a bit of what was owing for past months."

"Five hundred—pounds?" gasped Rosebell. "*You* have—five hundred pounds. Oh, Jack! I can't believe it. It's a fortune! What—whatever *are* you going to do with such a lot of money?"

Jack laughed again, in delight this time.

"I told Jake what I wanted to do, and he fixed it up with the lawyer when he made over something called a deed. He gave a separate sum to buy Dr. Orsdal his new practice and settle him in it, with lots of money over. He said he guessed that was his debt to your father for looking after me when I was penniless and robbed. So—so the doctor can't *help* taking the money, because it's his own. I was afraid he wouldn't take it from a boy like me."

Rosebell was crying and laughing together as she cuddled up to Jack.

"And you thought of *that*!" she cried. "You thought of *that*. What did Dad say?"

Jack flushed. "I'd rather not say," he replied, "but he was pleased. He wouldn't have taken it all else. But now it is settled and——"

Rosebell clapped her hands.

"And Mother will be able to come home," she cried. "Jack, I can't wait another second. I must run in and tell the others at once."

Helen and Geoff had given up pretending not to be curious. They had seen Dad just for a second as he looked in, laughing as he saw they were alone, and saying that he had strict orders to leave news-telling to someone else.

"Dad doesn't look the same," said Geoff. "When I opened the door he looked ever so ill and tired, and now though he's not had supper all the tiredness has gone. Jack's secret must be a big one."

"He might just as well have told us all

together," said Helen crossly. "Why should Rosebell know first?"

"I suppose," said Geoff slowly, "because she has always loved him best, and she has been much kinder to him than we have."

"I'm sure I've been very kind," began Helen, when the door was burst open and in tumbled Rosebell.

"The secret!" she cried, "the secret! It's the beautifullest, most glorious secret in the world."

"Miss Rosebell," said Nanna in her most severe tones, as she followed the little girl into the room, "your bath water's cold, and not another drop of 'ot do you have in it for your disobedience."

But no one paid any attention to Nanna.

"Tell us!" cried Geoff.

"Tell us!" cried Helen. And they neither of them had any dignity left at all.

"It's Mother!" gasped Rosebell, tears of joy rolling down her cheeks. "Jack's got an enormous fortune left him because

his dad found some gold claim before he died, and Jake Harrell is sorry for having tried to—to sneak it; and Jack has five hundred pounds, and *hundreds* more pounds, and Dad has enough to—to buy a beautiful healthy p—p—practice, and Mother will come home, and we—we shan't be poor again like w—we have been, and it's *all* Jack's doing."

By this time Nanna herself had forgotten cold bath-water, naughty girls, and waiting suppers. They all crowded round Rosebell, asking questions, laughing, sobbing —Geoff cheering, because he felt the more noise he made the less chance there was of his making a duffer of himself and crying like the girls.

At last Rosebell darted off to fetch Jack in. Jack was outside in the garden, and I think he would really have liked to slip off to his room instead of being pulled along by the excited Rosebell to the schoolroom.

Nanna had gone to tell the news to Ann and Cook, and Dr. Orsdale, having

finished his dinner, had come to join the children in the schoolroom.

Somehow Dad's coming quieted the hubbub, though it made the good news seem more real.

Helen made him sit down in Mother's chair, Geoff squatted on the hearth, Helen perched on the chair arm, whilst Rosebell appeared triumphant in the door — with Jack.

"Here he is!" said the little girl, "here he is! but he doesn't want anyone to thank him. He—he wants to feel it is *his* good news as well as ours."

Dad understood better than Helen and Geoff. Jack wanted to feel that he belonged to the family circle, which rejoiced to-night because the black cloud of anxiety had been lifted at last, and the sun was shining down into their hearts.

Geoff made room for Jack on the hearth so that they could share Jiggles between them, whilst Rosebell perched on Dad's other chair arm.

It was "quite almost dark" now, as Rosebell said, and bedtime could no longer be delayed.

"We shall have many plans to make to-morrow, chicks," said Dad, "and a great deal to talk of. I confess that, like you, it all seems to me too much like a nice dream at present. I expect we shall wake up in the morning and ask whether it can possibly be true; and when we find it *is* true, and that all our prayers and wishes have been answered in this wonderful way, we must not forget to thank God for His gift."

"Oh no, Dad!" said Rosebell; "I've been thanking Him already. And just to think this should all have happened since the day you sat here and gave us our job! How glad I am you gave it us!"

"I'm afraid," said Helen shyly, "I did my job very badly. I might have been so much nicer if I had tried. Will you forgive me, Jack?"

"It's all right," said Jack gruffly as he patted Jiggles, "there's nothing to forgive;

and—and I'm as glad as any of you are about the money and what it will buy, because—because—I want——"

"And *we* want too," added Rosebell, "for you to be one of us. I always did want it, Jack."

Jack looked up at once.

"I know *you* did," he replied—and it was then that Helen and Geoff knew exactly where they had failed in their job. They had not given Jack their love.

"Miss Rosebell," said Nanna in subdued tones from the doorway, "it's too late for your bath, but I'd be glad to know if you intends coming to bed to-night, my dear—though I don't wonder at your being forgetful, seein' things have gone right, after all the topsy-turvydom."

Rosebell ran laughing to the old nurse, after having given her good-night kisses.

"You never thought topsy-turvy Jack would be the one to make things go right though, Mrs. Nanna!" she cried, hugging her.

Nanna smiled. "It's true there's never any knowing," she replied. "And as the Book says: 'Cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it after many days'."

But by this time Rosebell was too sleepy to understand anything but the fact that she was the happiest and tiredest little girl in the world.

"And Mother will be able to come home after all," was her last waking thought. "*Dear* Jack, I would rather Mother had been able to come home this way than any other. How happy we shall all be, now Mother is coming, and everyone is—going —to love—Jack!"

And Rosebell fell asleep still smiling.

CHAPTER XII

The Home by the Sea

I can't tell you *all* about the bustle and excitement of the next few weeks. Such busy weeks! such hot weeks! weeks all jumbled up with joy, regret, delight, and anticipation.

Dr. Orsdale's new practice was going to be ever such a long way off, in sunny Cornwall, near the sea.

Helen was not in the least grown-up when she heard about this, but joined in all the excitement of talking over what they should do in their new home.

"There are moors," she said, "Dad says so. Moors with purple heather, and underground caves. How lovely that will be!"

"And the sea!" cried Rosebell.

"The cliffs!" said Geoff.

"Swimming!" said Jack.

"Boating!" put in Geoff.

"Bathing!" screamed Rosebell; "paddling and bathing, and shrimping and exploring!"

"We shall be able to be smugglers!" said Geoff.

"And Robinson Crusoes!" added Jack.

"And fun all day long," laughed Rosebell, clapping her hands, and rolling off the couch on to the floor.

"Mother is coming home the week after we settle," said Helen, "and then *I* shall come and play with you. Four is better than three."

There was a slight hesitation before Rosebell replied steadily: "Of course; we can have better 'sides' with four, and you will be able to help us with our collections. I'm going to collect seaweed."

"We'll collect everything and do everything," cried Geoff. "Oh, Jack, what

THE SEA! THE CLIFFS! THE ROCKS! CAN YOU IMAGINE THEIR JOY?

should we have done if you hadn't come? Dear old Jack!"

"Rot!" said Jack. "Isn't it a pity we can't take Noel Jeryl with us? He was groaning to me yesterday with envy because we were going to live in the land of cream and cakes and pies."

"The land of delight," murmured Rosebell. "If only there were no schools or governesses in Cornwall it would be perfectly perfect."

But if the new home could not be "perfectly perfect" in lazy Rosebell's way, it was as *near* perfection as could be.

Lucy had come back again, so she was here to help in the move, whilst Jack and Rosebell declared that if any of them felt like having influenza in the middle of this busy time, they were quite ready to take over the cooking.

Luckily no influenza appeared, for, when it came to actually moving, Jack, Rosebell, Geoff, and everyone else in the house were far too busy to trouble much about meals.

Rosebell especially had such a lot of "good-byes" to say, not only to friends, but to every bush, flower, and corner in her home surroundings.

"Cornwall will be lovely," she confided to Jack. "And I'm nearly exploding with excitement when I think of seeing darling Mother next week; but it *does* make me sad to know I shall never see these darling shrubs again, and the cherry tree I planted years ago, and the old barn, and the loft with the window in the roof, and all the things I remember ever since I was born. I wonder how long it takes for a new house to be a home."

"I don't think it takes long at all," said Jack; "though I don't understand about it as well as you do, because you see I have had so many homes, and you couldn't have called the camp shanties *home*, though I love to think of the days I spent in them. I suppose it is people who really make a home, not houses and gardens and trees and barns."

Rosebell brightened. "Then that's all right," she said gaily, "because all my home is going with me. There's Helen calling, and I know what it is about—Nanna won't let me pack my stone collection."

Rosebell was right, for she found Nanna declaring that "Miss Rosebell would want to claw up the house and garden next." So the stones were thrown away, the boxes strapped up, and the next day the last good-byes had to be said to the old home.

In spite of Jack's comforting words Rosebell shed tears on leaving; but the tears were soon dried when Helen whispered in her ear that Mother would be home next week.

I suppose it was because Mother would soon be taking over Helen's "responsibilities" that Helen was so much nicer, so much less grown-up, so much readier in joining in with the younger ones; or else it *may* have been that Helen had been

learning a lesson taught by her own failure, for Helen knew she had failed in the job which Dad had told her would be work for God. She had failed to give Jack love and sympathy. Yes, she knew that now; but it is never too late to learn, and Helen was trying to learn by following little Rosebell's unconscious example.

As for Geoff, he had told Jack straight out that he was sorry he had been so selfish and jealous. Those were ugly words, but they were true ones. No one had ever thought of Geoff being selfish before, because Rosebell had never claimed any "giving up" from him. It had been hard to "give up" his own ruling and superiority to Jack, and Geoff had failed, but like Helen he was going to learn from past failure to do better in future.

And how happy they would all be! There was no doubt at all in their minds about that when those four children ran out after the first tea in the new home to explore the dear, rambling old garden, and

then rush out through the wicket gate, across purple moors towards the sea.

The sea! the cliffs! the rocks! Can you imagine their joy? To think they were going to live here! Not to come just for a fortnight or a month's holiday, but to *live* here. Oh, glorious! It was so glorious that none of them could explain to each other how they felt about it. The great grey waves came crashing in over the rocks with a welcoming boom, and as if in answer Jack and Geoff snatched off their caps, and with a wild cheer went racing down to the shore, with Rosebell and Helen at their heels.

"A smugglers' cave!" cried Geoff. "What ho, my merry men! Smugglers and Red Indians, and—and heroes too; that's what we are going to be. What ho! for the great exploration. A cave—first start off—and untold treasures all along the coast. Oh, *grand*!"

He was off in a trice, scrambling over the grey rocks, after finding the cave nothing

but a hollow beneath the cliff. Helen was already searching for the dainty shells which strewed the beach and sands. Rosebell stood still in sheer delight, the salt breeze blowing back her fluffy curls from a radiant rosy face.

"Oh, Jack," she whispered, "it's the loveliest, most beautiful new home in the world, and if it hadn't been for you we should never have come to it!"

"And if it hadn't been for you," replied Jack simply, "I shouldn't have cared if we came or not. It was because you loved me, Rosebell, *really* loved me, that I didn't want to go back to Canada and the camp when—when I first came to England. Silas wrote and told me if I were unhappy I was to come, and he and the boys would look after me."

Rosebell turned. "You never told us that, Jack," said she.

Jack shook his head. "There wasn't any reason I should. I—I had meant to go; then—then there was *you*. You really

cared—and so I wanted to stay. Your caring made it home, even when the others didn't care. So you see, Rosebell, it was *all* your doing after all—all, every bit."

"A lobster!" shouted Geoff from afar. "A gr—grey lobster in this pool. Come, Jack, Helen, Rosebell! We'll take home a lobster for Dad's supper. What ho, he pinches! but it's the stick, not me."

There was a general scramble for the pool, and after many squeals and screams the grey lobster was secured, and carried home in Geoff's flannel blazer slung between two sticks.

Home, in the August gloaming, singing as they went, singing because home was already home, and they the happiest children in all England, since Cornwall was the loveliest county to be found, Birford House the dearest house, the black cloud of poverty had rolled away—and Mother would be home next week.

No wonder they sang till the moors and cliffs re-echoed with their songs, and Dad

came out to welcome them at the garden gate.

Helen and Geoff came first, Jack and Rosebell behind.

"It's real home already, isn't it?" whispered Rosebell, as she saw Dad waiting there. "You were right, Jack. It's real home to us all."

"Yes," said Jack, "home to us *all*, dear, dear little Rosebell!"

And Rosebell laughed softly—she was *so* happy.

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