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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BROTHER AND SISTER ***

BROTHER AND SISTER

BY

JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE

AUTHOR OF

"BROTHER AND SISTER'S SCHOOLDAYS"
"BROTHER AND SISTER'S HOLIDAYS"

BROTHER AND SISTER SERIES

BY JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE

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BROTHER AND SISTER

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BROTHER AND SISTER

CHAPTER I

THE MORRISONS

"Brother," said Mother Morrison, "you haven't touched your glass of milk. Hurry now, and drink it before we leave the table."

Brother's big brown eyes turned from his knife, which he had been playing was a bridge from the salt cellar to the egg cup, toward the tumbler of milk standing beside his plate.

"I don't have to drink milk this morning, Mother," he assured her confidently. "Honestly I don't. It's raining so hard that we can't go outdoors and grow, anyway."

Louise, his older sister, said sharply. "Don't be silly!" but Ralph, who was in a hurry to catch his train, stopped long enough to give a word of advice.

"Look here, Brother," he urged seriously, "better not skip a morning. Your birthday is next week, isn't it? Well, if you're not tall enough by Wednesday morning, you can't have the present I bought for you last night. Too short, no present—you think it over."

He stooped to kiss his mother, tweaked Sister's perky bow of hair-ribbon, and with a hasty "Good-bye" for the others at the table, hurried out into the hall. They heard the front door slam after him.

Spurred by Ralph's mysterious hint, Brother drank his milk, and then the Morrison family scattered for their usual busy day.

Brother and Sister were left to clear the breakfast table. They always did this, carrying out the dishes and silver to Molly in the kitchen. Then they crumbled the cloth neatly. Molly declared she could not do without them.

"What do you suppose Ralph is going to give you?" speculated Sister, carefully folding up the napkin Louise had dropped, and slipping it into the white pique ring embroidered with an "L." "Maybe it's a train?"

"No, I don't believe it's a train," said Brother slowly, crumbling a bit of bread and beginning to build a little farm with the crumbs. "No, I guess maybe he will give me a tool-chest."

"Come on, and bring the bread tray," suggested Sister practically. She never forgot the task

in hand for other interests. "Mother says we mustn't dawdle, Roddy, you know she did. It's my turn to feed the birds, so I'll crumb the table. Could I use your saw if you get a tool-chest?"

Brother answered dreamily that he supposed she could. He watched Sister and her crumb-brush sweep away his nice little bread-crumb fences, while he planned to build a real fence if Ralph's present should turn out to be the long-coveted tool-chest.

When Sister had swept up every tiny crumb, she and Brother went out to scatter the bits of bread to the birds who, winter and summer, never failed to come to the back door and who always seemed hungry.

This morning there were robins, starlings, a pair of beautiful big blue jays, and, of course, the rusty little sparrows. Each bird seemed to be pretending to the others that he was looking for worms, and each one slyly watched the Morrison back door in hopes that two small figures would presently come out and toss them a breakfast of breadcrumbs.

Sister flung her crumbs as far as her short arm would send them, and managed to hit an indignant old starling squarely in the eye. He glared at her crossly.

"Birds don't mind getting wet, do they?" said Brother, as the sparrows hopped about in the driving rain and pecked gratefully at the crumbs. "Let's hop the way they do, Betty."

Sister obediently hopped, looking not unlike a very plump little robin at that, with her dark eyes and bobbing curls. Only, you see, she and Brother were much heavier than any birds, and they made so much noise that Molly came to the door to see what they were doing.

"Another rainy day and the two of you bursting with mischief!" she sighed good-naturedly. "Will you be quiet for an hour if I let you make a dough-man while I'm mixing my bread?"

Brother and Sister loved to make dough-men, and so while Molly kneaded her bread, they worked busily and happily at the other end of the table, shaping two men from the bit of sponge she gave them and quite forgetting to scold about the unpleasant weather which kept them indoors.

Their real names, you must know, were Rhodes and Elizabeth Morrison. Rhodes was six, and Elizabeth five, and sometimes they were called "Roddy" and "Betty," but most always Brother and Sister.

This was partly because they were so many Morrisons.

There was Daddy Morrison, who was a lawyer and who went to town every morning to a busy office that seemed, to Brother and Sister, when they visited him, to be all papers and typewriters.

There was dear Mother Morrison, who was altogether lovely, with brown eyes like Brother's, and dark curly hair like Sister.

There were Louise and Grace, the twins; they were fifteen and went to high school, and were very pretty and important and busy.

Then there was Dick, the oldest of them all, and Ralph, who went to law school in the city, and Jimmie, who was seventeen and the captain of the high school football team.

Counting Brother and Sister, seven children, you see, and as Molly truly said, "a houseful." Molly had lived with Mother Morrison since Louise and Grace were babies, and they would not have known what to do without her. She was as much a part of the family as any of them.

The Morrison house was a big, shabby, roomy place with wide, deep porches and many windows. There was a large lawn in front and an old barn in back where the older boys had fitted up a gymnasium with all kinds of fascinating apparatus, most of which Brother and Sister were forbidden to touch.

The Morrisons lived in Ridgeway, a thriving suburb of the city, where Daddy Morrison, Dick and Ralph went every day.

And now that you are introduced, we'll go back to Brother and Sister making dough-men in Molly's kitchen.

"What makes my dough-man kind of dark?" inquired Sister, calling Molly's attention to the queer-shaped figure she had pieced together.

Sure enough Sister's dough-man, and Brother's, too, was a rather dark gray, while the bread Molly was mixing was creamy white.

Mother Morrison, coming into the kitchen carrying Brother's rubbers and raincoat, saved Molly an explanation.

CHAPTER II

GRANDMA HASTINGS

"Where are you going Mother?" asked Brother, when he saw the rubbers.

"I'm not going out," smiled Mother. "You are going for me, dear. These are your rubbers and coat—hop into them and run across the street to Grandma's with this apron pattern."

"Will you bake my dough-man, Molly?" begged Brother, struggling into his coat and taking the small parcel Mother gave him. "Is Betty coming?"

"Not this time," answered his mother. "It is raining too hard. Yes, Molly will bake your dough-man and you may eat him for lunch. Run along now."

Grandmother Hastings lived almost directly across the street from the Morrison house and she was putting her beautiful Boston fern out to get the rain when Brother tramped sturdily up her side garden path.

"Bless his heart, he's a regular little duck!" cried Grandma, giving him a tremendous hug.

That is the way grandmothers are, you know, whether they live across the street from you and see you every day, or whether they live miles away and come to visit you Christmas and summer times. A grandmother is always glad to see you.

Grandmother Hastings was short and plumpy and her white hair was curly and her eyes were blue. She had pink cheeks and wore a blue dress and a white apron with a frilly bib, and altogether, Brother thought privately, she looked very nice indeed.

"I'm very glad to get that pattern," she told him, patting the long leaves of the fern and spreading them out to catch the rain. "I've a magazine you can take back to Mother, dearie, and an old fashion book Sister will like for paper dolls. Come into the sitting-room while I find them for you. Take off your rubbers, child."

Brother followed her into the house and there Aunt Kate swooped upon him and tickled him as she always did. Aunt Kate was a school teacher. In summer she tutored backward pupils. She was on her way to give a lesson now and in a few minutes she went away merrily into the driving rain. That left Grandmother and Brother to entertain each other.

"Do you know what Ralph is going to give me for a birthday present, Grandmother?" Brother asked, dropping flat on his stomach to play jungle with the tigerskin that lay before the fireplace. "He says if I'm not tall enough I can't have it. But he's bought it all ready—he said so."

Brother, you see, would be six years old in a few days. He couldn't help thinking a great deal about his birthday.

Grandmother and Brother had no secrets from each other, though sometimes they planned surprises for the other members of the family.

"No, I don't know what Ralph plans to give you," admitted Grandmother. "Don't try to find out, dearie. It is much nicer to be surprised. Why, you know you wouldn't have a bit of fun next Wednesday if you knew what your presents were to be."

Brother was willing to be surprised, because Wednesday wasn't so long to wait. Still he thought he would like to know what Ralph's present was. Ralph was his dearest brother, and he had a happy knack of always giving Brother and Sister exactly what they wanted. Louise and Grace were apt to make them presents which were useful, like pretty socks and hair-ribbons for Sister, and gloves and handkerchiefs for Brother, but Ralph never did anything like that.

"I've dropped a stitch in my knitting," said Grandmother suddenly. "Brother, I wonder if you could run upstairs and bring me my glasses? I think they are on the bureau in my room."

Brother ran upstairs and went into Grandmother's pretty bedroom. There were white and silver things on her bureau and a little gold jewel box and several bottles of different colors. But, though Brother looked carefully, he could not find the glasses.

He went out into the hall.

"Oh, Grandma!" he called. "Your glasses aren't on the bureau."

"Dear, dear," sighed Grandmother. "'Let me see, where can they be? Do you know, Brother, I'm afraid I have left them in my black silk bag on the closet shelf. Can you get it, or shall I come up?"

"I can get it," answered Brother confidently. "You wait, Grandma."

The closet shelf was pretty high, but Brother carried a chair to the closet door and by standing on it he was able to reach the shelf. Goodness, what was more, he could see the things on the shelf.

And they were bundles!

One—two—three—Brother counted three mysterious paper bundles, tied with brown string.

Now you know if you had a birthday due most any minute and your head was full of the presents you hoped to receive, and you saw three bundles on the shelf in your grandma's closet, you know you would probably do just what Brother did; poke your finger into the top bundle. Brother poked. Then he prodded. The top bundle slipped and carried the other two with it. Brother was brushed off the chair and three bundles and one boy landed in a heap on the floor.

"Brother!" cried Grandma, who had come up to see what kept him so long. "Are you hurt?"

"No'm," answered Brother, rather foolishly. "I was just feeling these bundles, Grandma, to see—to—see——"

"Whether they were birthday presents?" smiled Grandma. "Well, dearie, they are nothing but blankets tied up to send to the cleaners. I'm glad, for your sake, they were, for you might have hurt yourself, otherwise, as it is, they were soft and thick for you to fall on."

"I'll get the glasses now," murmured Brother hastily.

He climbed up on the chair again and this time found without any trouble the black bag which held Grandma's glasses.

"Mother is waving a handkerchief—that means she wants you," said Grandmother, glancing from the window. "Scoot along, dear, and don't think too much about the birthday till it comes. Here are the magazines. And here's a drop-cake for you."

Brother paddled down the steps, went halfway to the front hedge, and then turned.

"Oh, Grandma!" he shouted. "Do you know what I think Ralph is going to give me? I think it's a tool-chest!"

CHAPTER III

SISTER IN MISCHIEF

"I hope it's like this to-morrow!"

Brother stood on the front porch, flattening his nose against the screen door and sniffing the fragrant June sunshine.

Ever since his unsuccessful attempt to find out from Grandma Hastings what Ralph's present was to be, it had rained. That was three days ago, so you may be sure the whole Morrison family were very glad to see the sun again. Especially as the very next day was Brother's birthday.

"Brother, I'm going down town to buy the favors for your party," announced Louise, who sat in the porch hammock crocheting a sweater. "Wouldn't you like to go with me?"

Brother thought he would.

"Take me?" begged Sister, falling over the small broom she carried, in her eagerness to be one of the party. "It's my turn, Louise, honestly it is."

"Well, you see, I can't very well take you both," explained Louise kindly. "Mrs. Adams is going to call for me with her car, and it wouldn't be polite to ask her to take two children; and as it is Brother's birthday, he ought to be the one to go—don't you think so?"

Sister nodded, though her lower lip trembled suspiciously. And when Mrs. Adams drove her shiny automobile up to the curb, and Louise and Brother were whisked away in it, two big tears rolled down Sister's round cheeks.

"Why, honey!" Grace, the other twin sister, swinging her tennis racquet, came through the hall and saw the tears. "What you crying for?" she asked. "Everyone gone and left you? I'll tell you what to do—you go out in the kitchen and take a peep at what is on the table and you won't feel like crying another moment."

"What is it?" asked Sister cautiously.

She wasn't going to stop crying and then find out she had been cheated.

"You go look," answered Grace mysteriously.

So sister started for the kitchen and Grace ran off to her game of tennis with Jimmie.

The kitchen was in perfect order and very quiet. Molly was upstairs making the beds, and Mother Morrison was planning the party with Grandmother Hastings.

"Oh!" said Sister softly as she saw what was on the table. "Oh, my!"

For right in the center of the white-topped table, on a large pink plate, perched Brother's birthday cake! It was a beautiful cake, perfectly round and very smooth and brown.

"But the icing!" said Sister aloud. "There's no ICING! I s'pose Molly didn't have time."

If Sister had stopped to think, she would have remembered that all the birthday cakes Molly made—and she made seven every year for the Morrisons, and one for Grandmother Hastings—were always iced with pink or white or chocolate icing.

But, you see, she didn't stop to think, and when she discovered a bowl of lovely creamy white stuff on the small table between the windows, this small girl decided that she would ice the cake and save Molly the trouble.

There was a little film of water over the top of the bowl, but Sister took a wooden spoon and stirred it carefully, and the water mixed nicely with the white stuff, so that she had a bowl filled with the smoothest, whitest "icing" any cook could ask for.

"I'll get a silver knife to spread it with," said Sister, who had often watched Molly, and knew what to do.

She brought the knife from the dining-room and had just put one broad streak of white across the top of the cake when Molly came down the back stairs and saw her.

"Sister!" cried Molly. "What are you doing with my cold starch?"

"I'm icing the cake," answered Sister calmly. "You forgot it, I guess."

Poor Molly grabbed the bowl from Sister's hands.

"Can't I leave the kitchen one minute that you don't get into mischief?" she scolded. "This isn't ICING—it's STARCH for Mr. Jimmie's collars. I'm going to make a beautiful chocolate icing for the cake this afternoon and write Brother's name on it in white frosting."

"Oh!" said Sister meekly.

"Go on upstairs, do," Molly urged her. "I've my hands full today getting ready for the party; can't you find something nice to do upstairs?"

Thus sped on her way, Sister reluctantly mounted the stairs to the second floor.

"I could play jacks with Nellie Yarrow," she said to herself. "Only she's lost her jackstones and I can't find mine. What's that on Dick's bureau?"

Ralph and Jimmie roomed together, but Dick had a room of his own, and though Sister was strictly forbidden to meddle with his things, they had a great attraction for her. She could just see the top of Dick's chiffonier from the floor and now she dragged a chair up to it and climbed up to see what the shining thing was that had caught her eye.

It was a gold collar button, and Dick, she found, had a box of pearl and gold buttons that Sister was sure she had never seen before. She played with them, tossing them up and down and watching them glitter, until a sudden thought struck her.

"They'd make lovely jackstones," she whispered. "I could use 'em and put them right back. I know Nellie has a ball."

Dick had several new ties, and Sister had to admire these before she could leave the chiffonier. Finally she slipped the box of pretty buttons in her pocket and jumped down. She put the chair where she had found it, and ran downstairs and through the hedge that separated the Morrison house from that of Dr. Yarrow's.

"Nellie, oh, Nellie!" called Sister. "Come on, let's play jackstones."

"Haven't any," answered Nellie Yarrow, a little girl a year or so older than Sister. "All I have left is my ball."

"Well, get that and we can play," Sister told her. "I've found something we can use—see!"

Nellie admired the collar buttons immensely and thought it would be great fun to play with them. She ran and got her ball and the two little friends sat down on the concrete walk to play jackstones, heedless of the hot morning sun.

Sister had won one game and Nellie two, when they heard Louise calling.

"Sister! Sister! Where are you? If you want to help fix the fishpond, you'll have to come right away."

Sister stuffed the buttons in her pocket and ran home, eager to see what Louise and Brother had bought.

CHAPTER IV

PARTY PREPARATIONS

When Mother Morrison had suggested a fishpond for the party, Louise and Grace had protested.

"Oh, Mother!" they cried. "That's so old!"

"But the children like it," said Mother Morrison mildly.

"It's fun," urged Brother. "It's fun to fish over the table and catch something!"

Sister, too, had asked for the pond, so it was decided to have one. Louise and Grace might not care for such things at their birthday parties, but this, as Sister said, was "different."

"We bought bushels and bushels," Brother informed Sister as she bounded through the hedge and up to the front porch. "Little colored pencils, and crayons, and games, and dolls, and oh!—everything!"

Louise, whose shopping bag was certainly bulging with parcels, laughed merrily.

"We bought all the little gifts for the fish-pond and for the—there! I almost told you." She clapped her hand over her mouth and laughed again.

"For the what?" teased Sister. "Tell me, Louise—I won't tell."

"No, Mother said no one was to know," declared Louise firmly. "Now all these packages you may open, and after lunch I'll help you tie them up again and fix the pond. But these other parcels go upstairs to Mother's room and no one is to touch them."

She tumbled half the contents of her bag on the porch floor and then ran upstairs with the rest.

"Let's look at them," said Sister eagerly. "What's the matter, Roddy?"

"I was thinking," explained Brother, making no move to open the packages. "We saw a little boy down town and his foot was all tied up in a rag, and I know it hurt him 'cause he limped."

"Maybe he sprained his ankle," said Sister. "Like Dr. Yarrow's cousin, you know."

"It wasn't his ankle—it was his foot," insisted Brother. "And I told Louise Mother said we mustn't go on the ground without our sandals, and she said she guessed the boy didn't have any sandals; she said he prob'bly didn't have any shoes, either."

"Nor any stockings—just rags?" asked Sister in pity. "I like to go barefoot, Roddy, but I like my new patent leather slippers, too."

"Maybe he has some for Sunday," comforted Brother, trying to be hopeful. "Everybody has to wear shoes on Sunday."

"Yes, of course they do," agreed Sister, who had never heard of a boy and girl who didn't wear shoes on Sunday and every day in the week except when they were allowed to go barefoot as a great treat.

The tempting packages were not to be forgotten one moment longer, and they decided to "take turns" opening them.

"Isn't it fun!" giggled Sister. "What do you s'pose Mother is going to make you, Roddy?"

"I don't know," replied Brother absently. "I keep thinking about Ralph's present. He says that he thinks I'll be tall enough to have it by tomorrow."

"Did you drink all your milk for breakfast?" asked Sister anxiously.

Ralph was most particular about the children's milk. He insisted that they couldn't grow properly without enough milk, and as both were anxious to grow tall, Brother and Sister usually drank their milk without fussing.

Brother had finished his to the last drop that morning, he said, and when they were called in to lunch presently, he drank another glass so that he would surely grow enough to please Ralph.

"And now we'll do up the fishpond presents," said Louise, when they had finished lunch.

She and Grace both helped, for Mother Morrison was busy in the kitchen with Molly, and of course none of the brothers were home during the day except Jimmie, and he was usually busy out in the barn where the gymnasium was.

You have probably "fished" in a fishpond yourself at parties, and know what it is. Little gifts are placed somewhere out of sight, and each small guest is given a fishing rod and line with a hook at the end. He dangles this over the back of a sofa, or over a table, and when he draws it up there is a "fish," or the present, attached to it.

Louise had plenty of nice white paper and pink string, and each gift was carefully wrapped and tied. Dark blue crepe paper was tacked around three sides of a table and this table placed across one corner of the parlor. This was the "ocean." The presents were placed on the floor back of the table, and Brother and Sister knew, from past pleasant experience, that when it came time to fish, the packages would obligingly attach themselves to the hooks.

"Tomorrow's ever so long off," sighed Brother, when the fishpond was ready and Louise and Grace had gone over to the library to take back some books.

He and Sister were not wanted in the kitchen and they were asked not to touch the clean white clothes spread out on the guest room bed for them to wear to the party. There really did not seem to be anything for them to do.

"Let's go out and watch for Ralph?" suggested Sister.

Ralph was the best loved brother, after all, though, of course, the children loved Dick and Jimmie dearly. But no one was quite as patient as Ralph, no one had time to read to them as often as he did, no one told them stories without coaxing as Ralph did.

He and Dick came up the street from the station together this night, and though Dick kissed Sister and said, "Hello, kid," to Brother, he dashed into the house, while Ralph stayed to talk.

"Birthday tomorrow, Brother?" he asked teasingly, though he knew very well that Brother would be six years old.

"Oh, Ralph!" Brother was so excited he nearly stuttered. "Ralph, couldn't you tell me what the present is now? I'm just as tall, and it's almost my birthday. Please, Ralph?"

Ralph swung Sister up and sat her on the fence-post.

"Well, I don't believe I could do that," he replied slowly. "Let's see, did you drink your milk today without grumbling?"

"Yes, I did—didn't I, Sister?" said Brother eagerly.

"Yes," nodded Sister. "He drank all of his for lunch, too, Ralph, and didn't spill any."

"That's certainly fine," praised Ralph. "I'm sure you've grown a little bit every day, too. Well, Brother, I tell you what I'll do—tomorrow morning I'll bring the present up to your room before breakfast. How will that do?"

Brother was more excited than ever, and for once he was ready to go to bed that night without a protest. He and Sister trailed sleepily off upstairs, wishing for the morning to come so that they might know what this mysterious present was.

They had two little white beds in the same room and they could undress themselves very nicely if they helped each other with the buttons. Mother Morrison usually came up before they were ready for bed, and on bath nights she always came up with them and stayed till they were in bed.

The night before a birthday party was, of course, a bath night, and Sister was very willing to let Brother take his bath first because she had a picture book she wanted to look at. She was lying on her bed, in her nightie, looking at the pictures while Brother splashed in the tub and Mother Morrison waited for him to stop playing and use the soap to lather himself, instead of pretending it was a boat, when Dick knocked on the door.

"Look here!" he said, opening it and thrusting in his head. "Have either of you kids been in my room today?"

"How nice you are!" cried Sister, sitting up to look at Dick, who, indeed, did seem very nice, though he was without his coat.

"I'm twenty minutes late now," growled Dick. "I've hunted everywhere for my collar buttons and studs, and I can't find them."

CHAPTER V

DICK'S BUTTONS

Before Sister could say anything, in pranced Brother, very pink and clean from his hot bath and treading on his gray bathrobe at every other step.

"Have you been meddling with my things again?" demanded Dick. "Mother, I've an engagement at eight o'clock and it's quarter past now; every blessed collar button is gone from my chiffonier!"

Mother Morrison, who had followed Brother into the room, looked anxiously at him.

"Brother, you haven't been in Dick's room today, have you?" she asked him.

Then Sister, whose memory had been waking up, spoke.

"Please, Dick," she said in a very little voice. "Please, I had the buttons."

"Oh, you did!" Dick quite forgot to smile at her. "What did you want 'em for? Where are they now?"

"You see, I was playing jackstones with Nellie Yarrow, and afterward I—I left them in my pocket—" Sister's voice trailed off.

She recollected that the dress she had been wearing was now down the laundry chute.

"Mother, something's got to be done!" fumed Dick. "I can't have the kids going through my stuff and helping themselves to whatever they want; those buttons were my solid gold ones and my good studs were in the same box. There's the telephone!—Nina will be furious! Sister, where did you say that dress was?"

Dick rushed downstairs to answer the telephone, leaving a sorrowful Sister curled up in a forlorn little heap on the bed.

"My blue dress is way down in the laundry," she wailed. "The buttons are in the pocket. Oh, Mother, it's awful far down there, and it's dark on the stairs!"

"What's all the racket about?" inquired Ralph, coming to the door. "Is Sister crying? And Dick is trying to smooth down Nina Carson, who seems to be in a bad way. Want any help with these young ones, Mother? Anyway, tell a fellow the cause of the excitement."

Sister smiled through her tears. "Young ones" was what Molly's country sister had once called them, and Ralph always said it when he meant to make her laugh.

"I really think Sister should go down and get the buttons from her dress pocket," said dear Mother Morrison decidedly. "I have forbidden her, time and again, to touch anything in Dick's room. Take your kimona and slippers, Sister, and hurry; I'll have your bath ready for you when you come back."

More tears ran down Sister's round cheeks. Her eyes were so full of salt water she couldn't find the armholes of her pink kimona, and Ralph had to help her.

"I'll go with her, Mother," he offered. "I'll sit on the stairs and wait while she hunts for the buttons; and after this you—will leave Dick's things alone, won't you, Sister?"

Sister promised joyfully, and paddled off downstairs with Ralph. The dark stairs that led to the laundry didn't frighten her one bit, and while Ralph sat on the last step and held the door open, Sister snapped on the light and found the blue dress on top of the basket that stood under the chute. Surely enough, the buttons were in the pocket just as she had left them. She took the box and hurried back to Ralph. "Where's Dick going?" she asked him, as they went upstairs.

"Oh, out somewhere, to see some girl," replied Ralph, who seldom went to call on a girl.

"Scoot now, Sister—I'm going out on the porch and read. You've made poor old Dick half an hour late as it is."

Ralph went out on the screened front porch, where Daddy Morrison was reading beside the electric lamp, and had just picked up his magazine, when there was a patter of little feet and Sister threw her arms around him breathlessly.

"I love you, Ralph!" she said quickly, hugging him and then turning to run.

"Here, here!" cried Daddy Morrison in surprise. "Thought you were in bed long ago. Don't I get any kissing?"

"Mother is waiting to bathe me," explained Sister hurriedly, "and Dick wants his collar buttons, so I have to go, Daddy."

Her father caught her as she rushed past him and gave her a quick kiss.

"Sister!" called Mother Morrison. "Sister, are you coming?"

Sister, the box of buttons clutched tightly in her hand, ran upstairs. Dick, glowering, met her at the top.

"For goodness' sake!" he ejaculated. "I'd about given up hope—and if you ever touch one of my things again—"

"I won't!" promised Sister hastily. "Honest Injun, I won't. You aren't mad, are you, Dick?"

Dick was wrestling with a stiff collar before the glass in the hall.

"No, I'm not mad, but I shall be in a minute," he announced grimly. "Don't stand there and watch me, please; you make me nervous."

"Come and take your bath, dear," called Mother Morrison.

"Don't you hear Mother? What are you waiting for?" demanded Dick.

"Waiting for you to kiss me good-night," answered Sister composedly.

Dick stared at her. Then he laughed.

"There!" he said, picking Sister up and kissing her soundly. "Now will you leave me in peace, you monkey?"

Sister was satisfied and hurried off to her bathing. When she came out of the bathroom, she found Brother sleepily waiting for her, sitting up, in his bed.

"If you hear Ralph in the morning," he told her earnestly, "you call me, 'cause I want to see my own birthday present before you do."

"Can't I look at it if you're not awake?" asked Sister hopefully.

"No, you mustn't," said Brother firmly. "It's my birthday present, and I want to see it first. Now you remember!"

Mother Morrison kissed them both, put a screen in another window, for the night was warm, and snapped off the light. It was time for Brother and Sister to be asleep.

"Roddy!" whispered Sister softly.

"Uh-huh?" came sleepily from Brother.

"Suppose I can't help looking when Ralph opens the door?"

Brother roused himself.

"You mustn't," he repeated. "It's my birthday. I wouldn't look first if it was your birthday present. You can shut your eyes, can't you?"

Sister sighed, and a big yawn came and surprised the sigh.

"Maybe he'll have it tied in a paper," she murmured hopefully. "Then I can't see it."

CHAPTER VI

RALPH'S PRESENT

The sun rose bright and early on Brother's birthday morning. Not any earlier than usual, perhaps, but it certainly woke Brother a whole half-hour earlier than he usually opened his eyes.

Almost at the same moment that his brown eyes opened wide, and he sat up in bed, Sister's dark eyes also opened wide and she sat up in her little white bed.

"Oh!" she said, blinking. "OH, it's your birthday, Roddy! Many happy returns of the day—and I have a present for you!"

She slipped out of bed and ran over to the chest of white drawers that held her own possessions.

"You can play with them a little while and then you can eat 'em," she explained, returning with a flat, white box which she put on Brother's lap.

The present proved to be a pound of animal crackers, of which Brother was very fond, and Sister was telling him how she had carefully picked out as many horses and elephants as she could—for indulgent Grandma Hastings had bought several pounds of the crackers, and allowed Sister to select the two kinds of animals that were Brother's favorites—when they heard Ralph's quick step in the hall.

"Here comes Ralph! Don't look!" commanded Brother hastily.

Sister promptly dived under the bedclothes, and when Ralph softly opened the door—lest the children were still asleep—he saw Brother staring eagerly toward him and a little lump in the middle of Sister's bed.

"Well, young man, how does it feel to be six years old?" Ralph asked merrily, putting down the basket he carried on the floor, and coming over to Brother, who stood up to hug him.

"Just as nice," gurgled Brother, standing still to receive the six "spanks" without which no birthday could be properly celebrated.

"Can I look yet?" asked a muffled voice meekly.

"Why, sweetheart, what have they done to you?" demanded Ralph in amazement, uncovering a very warm and flushed little girl. "I thought you were asleep, honey. Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, I feel all right," Sister assured him cheerfully. "Only I promised Brother I wouldn't look at the present before he did."

"That's so, I did bring a present, didn't I?" said Ralph, pretending to have forgotten. "Well, Brother, stand up while I measure you once more; I must be sure that you are tall enough and that means that you drank your milk every time without grumbling."

"Couldn't he grumble?" asked Sister, watching while Ralph stood brother against the wall and made a tiny mark with a pencil. "You never said he couldn't grumble, Ralph."

"Didn't I?" Ralph said. "Well, then, I should, because that is very important. You will grow, you know, if you drink your milk and grumble about it, but not half as fast as you will grow if you drink the milk and make no fuss. That's true, Sister—I'm not joking."

"I didn't grumble much, did I, Sister?" interposed Brother. "Haven't I grown, Ralph?"

"Yes, I think you have—enough to have what I have brought you," returned Ralph cheerfully. "Here, now, tell me what you think of this."

He stooped down and lifted the lid of the basket. Then he tipped it over on one side and out rolled the fattest brown and white collie puppy dog you ever saw!

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" shrieked Brother and Sister together. "What a perfectly dear little puppy!"

"He's yours, Brother," said Ralph, smiling like the dear big brother he was. "Yours to take care of and love, and to name."

"Hasn't he any name?" asked Brother, hugging the fat puppy, who seemed to like it and tried to say so with his little red tongue. "I don't know what to name a puppy dog."

"Call him 'Brownie,'" suggested Sister, down on her knees on the floor, watching the dog with shining eyes. "I think that is a nice name."

"So do I," agreed Brother.

"I do, too," said Ralph. "And now you must get dressed if you are not to be late for breakfast; and I must go down now—I have to take an earlier train in."

"Won't you come to the party?" begged Sister, as Ralph stood up to go.

"Don't believe I'll be home in time," he answered. "But you can tell me all about it and that will be almost as nice."

Mother Morrison came in to help them dress and she kissed Brother six times because it was his birthday. He wore a new blue sailor suit, and Sister put on her next-to-the-best hair-ribbon in his honor.

"I like birthdays," sighed Brother, slipping into his seat at the breakfast table and eyeing the little heap of bundles at his plate with great delight. "Look at my puppy dog, Dick."

"Well, that is a nice pup," admitted Dick, putting down his paper. "Have you named him yet?"

"Name's Brownie—Betty thought of it," replied Brother. "Can he have cereal, Mother? And Daddy wrote on this box, didn't he?" The little boy picked up a box wrapped in paper.

"Now just a minute," said Mother Morrison firmly. "The dog can't eat at the table, dear; put him down until you have finished breakfast. I don't want you to open the parcels, either, until you have had your milk and cereal. But those two on top you may open—they are from Daddy and Dick and they're going to leave in ten minutes."

Brother opened the two packages eagerly. That from Daddy Morrison was a little wooden block and a set of rubber type with an ink-pad, so that Brother might play at printing. He knew his letters and, if someone helped him, could spell a number of words. Dick's parcel contained a little silver collar for the new puppy, so made that it could be made larger for him as he grew.

"Oh, Dick!" Brother flung himself upon that pleased young man and kissed him heartily. Somehow Brother seldom kissed Dick, although he loved him dearly. "It's the nicest collar!"

"All right, all right," said Dick hastily. "Glad you like it. Coming, Dad?"

Brother had to thank Daddy Morrison for his gift and kiss him good-bye, and then the interrupted breakfast went on. As soon as they had all finished, they gathered around Brother to watch him open his birthday gifts.

CHAPTER VII

MORE PRESENTS

"With so many birthdays in one family, we must not give elaborate or expensive presents ever," Mother Morrison had once said, and she had made that a rule.

So Brother's presents, while representing a great deal of beautiful love, were simple and mostly home-made.

Louise had made him an entire set of new sails for his ship Swallow; Grace had cleverly painted and cut out a set of paper soldiers, and set them in tiny wooden blocks so that they stood upright; Jimmie's present was a set of little garden tools; Molly brought in a gingerbread man, very wide and tall and most handsomely decorated with pink sugar icing. And Mother Morrison gave him a box of watercolor paints and a painting book.

Just as Brother had unwrapped the last of his gifts, dear Grandmother Hastings hurried in. Under her arm she carried a large square box, and her eyes twinkled as she set it down.

"For the birthday boy!" she said.

"A toolchest!" shouted Brother in delight. "Look, Grandma, Ralph gave me a puppy!"

"I hope you said 'thank you!' just like that!" laughed Grandmother, as Brother hugged her so tightly she could scarcely get her breath. "Let me give you six kisses, dearie. Why, Brother, what is the matter?"

"I never said 'thank you' at all," mourned Brother. "Did I, Sister? And Ralph gave me such a nice puppy dog."

"But you can say 'thank you' tonight, can't he, Grandma?" protested Sister loyally.

"Why, of course, dear. Don't worry, Brother—Ralph knew you were very happy to have the doggie. Now come and tell me what you are going to call him."

There were many things to be done to get ready for the party that afternoon, and while

Brother and Sister introduced Brownie to their grandmother, the rest of the family scattered to their work. Presently Grandmother Hastings declared she must run home and put a lace collar on her best frock so that she could come to the party, and Brother and Sister were left alone with the new presents.

"Let's take Brownie out for a walk," suggested Sister. "Have you fed him, Roddy?"

Brother shook his head. No, Brownie had had no breakfast.

"I wish I'd said thank you' to Ralph," worried Ralph's little brother. "Maybe he won't come home to supper tonight, and I'll be in bed when he comes."

"Telephone him," said Sister, stroking one of Brownie's velvet ears.

"I don't know the name of the law school," objected Brother.

"Ask Daddy," promptly responded Sister. "He'll know."

The children knew the number of Daddy Morrison's big office in the city, and both could telephone very nicely. The phone booth was under the hall stairs and Brother knew no one in the house could hear him when he took down the receiver.

"Please give me 6587 Main," he said politely, while Sister and Brownie sat down on the floor to wait and listen.

Dick was in his father's office, and unless the person calling asked for Mr. Morrison, senior, the switchboard operator gave them Mr. Morrison, junior. That was Dick, who was named for Daddy Morrison.

"Hello, hello!" came Dick's voice over the wire in answer to Brother's call.

"I want Daddy," said Brother distinctly.

"Is that you, Brother?" asked Dick in surprise. "Did Mother ask you to call him? Is anything wrong at home?"

"No, only I want to speak to him," said Brother impatiently.

"He's busy—if you are only trying to amuse yourself, I advise you to stop it," answered Dick rather sharply. "You know you are not supposed to use the 'phone, Brother."

"I guess I can talk to my father," asserted Brother indignantly. "You tell him I want to speak to him, Dick Morrison!"

Dick apparently made the connection, for in another moment Brother heard his father's voice.

"Yes, Son?" it said gently. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, Daddy!" Brother spoke rapidly, his words tumbling over each other. "I never said 'thank you' to Ralph for the puppy dog! An' sometimes he doesn't come home to supper, and I don't see him till tomorrow morning. I want to tell him how much I like Brownie, and I don't know the name of the law school. Will you tell me so I can ask 'Central' for the number and call Ralph up?"

There was a pause. Daddy Morrison was apparently thinking.

"I'll tell you, son," he said presently. "I do not believe Ralph's school allows their pupils to be called from a class to answer the telephone, so you had better not try that plan. But Ralph is coming to the office this noon to go to lunch with Dick. You tell Mother that I said you were to be permitted to telephone the office at half-past twelve. In that way you'll catch Ralph here and can say what you want to him. How will that do?"

"That's fine, Daddy!" replied Brother gratefully. "Thank you ever so much—wait a minute, Daddy—"

"I'm just saying the good-bye," called Sister, who loved to telephone.

"Good-bye, youngsters," said Daddy Morrison, laughing as he hung up the receiver.

"Well, for goodness' sake, what are you two doing here?" demanded Louise, coming through the hall with something hidden in her apron. "Who said you could telephone? Whom did you call up?"

"Daddy," answered Brother serenely. "He said I could call the office again at half-past twelve. What you got, Louise?"

"Secrets," said Louise mysteriously. "People with birthdays shouldn't ask questions."

She hurried on toward the kitchen and in a few moments the children heard her laughing with Molly.

"I think Brownie is hungry," insisted Sister. "Aren't you ever going to feed him?"

"Of course he's hungry," chimed in Grace, who had overheard. "There's a bowl of bread and milk Mother fixed for him before breakfast, out on the back porch, with a plate over it to keep the cats out. Take him out there and feed him, Brother."

Brownie was indeed very hungry and the children enjoyed watching him eat the bread and milk Mother Morrison had fixed for him. After he had eaten it all up, they took him out on the grass to play, but that fat little brown puppy, instead of playing with them, curled up and went to sleep.

"Never mind—here comes the party!" cried Sister, whose bright eyes had spied a wagon turning into the drive.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PARTY

"The party" happened to be the ice-cream, and Brother and Sister watched eagerly as the delivery boy carried the heavy wooden tub in which the cream was packed, up the back steps.

"Going to have a party?" he smiled at them as he came back to his wagon. "Have a good time!"

The pretty little notes of invitation, which Mother Morrison had written to six boys and six girls, friends of Brother's and Sister's, two weeks ago, had said from "four to six," so it was time to dress in the best white clothes soon after lunch. Indeed, Brother's collar bow was not tied before the doorbell rang, and Nellie Yarrow arrived.

"I suppose she lived so far away, she thought she might be late," said Louise.

She ran downstairs and showed Nellie where to put the present she had brought for Brother.

After that the other boys and girls came, one by one, and Brother soon had a little pile of presents on the living-room table. He opened each one, and said thank you to the child who had brought it, and he forgot to be shy, so that he really enjoyed it all very much.

Charlie Raynor and his sister, Winifred, were the last to come, and Winifred was excited over something.

"I had the most awful time with Charlie!" she announced earnestly, to sympathetic Mother Morrison. "He acted dreadful!"

Winifred was two years older than Charlie and felt responsible for him.

"Give Roddy his present now," Winifred urged Charlie. "Hurry, I tell you."

Silently Charlie held out a little paper bag of candy.

"I had all I could do to keep him from eating it on the way here," his sister explained. "He just loves candy!"

Brother took the bag of candy and put it with his other gifts on the table. Then the children began the peanut hunt, which was the first game Louise and Grace had planned for them.

This was played outdoors, and it was fully half an hour before all the peanuts had been discovered. Then, as several of the girls wanted to start the old, old game of "Going to Jerusalem," and Grace offered to play the music, they all trooped back to the living-room.

"Why, Roddy, your candy is gone!" announced Sister in surprise. "When did you eat it?"

Brother came up to her where she stood by the table of presents.

"I didn't eat it," he said wonderingly. "I left it right there on top of that book. Isn't that funny!"

"Well, it's gone," asserted Sister. "Someone ate it!"

Winifred had heard, and now she turned on the unfortunate Charlie.

"Charles Eldridge Raynor!" she said sternly. "Did you eat Roddy's candy that you brought him? Did you?"

Charlie nodded miserably. He had slipped into the room, unnoticed during the peanut hunt, and unable to longer withstand the temptation, had calmly eaten up his birthday gift.

"I hope," stammered Winifred with very red cheeks, "I hope you will excuse him, Mrs. Morrison. I never knew him to do such a thing before!"

"Oh, it isn't anything so very dreadful," declared Mother Morrison, smiling. "Any laddie with a sweet tooth might easily do the same thing. Come, children, Grace is waiting to play for you."

They played "Going to Jerusalem" and "Drop the Handkerchief," and all the time there was the mysterious fishpond back of the table! But they could not fish till after they had had ice cream.

As they were playing a noisy game of "Tag" out on the lawn, Molly came to the door to ask them to come into the dining-room.

Such a pretty table met their eyes! It seemed to be all blue and white, and in the center was the big birthday cake—iced as only Molly could ice it, and showing no trace of the starch Sister had tried to cover it with. Six candles twinkled merrily on the top.

"Make six wishes, Brother," said Mother Morrison.

"Then he blows, and as many candles as he blows out he will have wishes come true," explained Sister quaintly.

Brother made his wishes—they must not be spoken aloud—and then took a deep breath.

Pouf! Three of the candles went out

"Three wishes!" shouted the children. "You'll have three wishes come true!"

It was a lovely birthday supper. Everyone said so. They had chicken sandwiches, and cocoa, and vanilla and strawberry ice-cream, and of course the birthday cake, which Brother cut in slices himself with the big silver cake knife.

"Why—look!" ejaculated Sister in surprise, glancing up from her cake at the doorway.

Mother Morrison stood there, smiling, and in her hands she carried what seemed to be a very large pudding or pie baked in a milk pan.

"What is it?" said Brother curiously. "What is it?"

"It's a secret," answered his mother mysteriously. "Grandmother Hastings planned it for you."

"And you and Louise bought part of it," Grandmother Hastings assured him, nodding and smiling from the other doorway, the one that led into the hall.

She had come over, in her prettiest white and lavender gown, to see the end of the party.

Mother Morrison came up to the table with the pie and the children saw that the paper crust was full of little slits and that from each slit a ribbon hung out. Some were blue and some were pink.

"Each girl must choose a blue ribbon," said Mother Morrison. "The pink ones are for the boys. You pull first, Lucy."

Lucy Reed pulled one of the blue ribbons. She hauled out a little celluloid doll dressed in a gay red frock.

"How lovely!" Lucy cried. "Do we all get something?"

Each child was eager to pull a ribbon, and, wasn't it strange?—there were just enough ribbons to go round! After every one, including Brother and Sister, had had his turn, the "crust" was all torn, and not a single present or ribbon was left.

"Half-past five!" said Louise then, looking at her little wrist-watch. "We must hurry with the fishing."

So they went into the living-room and had a delightful time fishing in the pond back of the table. There was a gift for everyone who fished, and when six o'clock struck, and it was time to go home, each small guest had a package to take along.

"We've had the nicest time," they called to Mother Morrison as they said good-bye. "We hope Roddy has a party every year."

CHAPTER IX

OUT IN THE BARN

"The party was a great success, eh?" asked Ralph at the breakfast table the next morning. "I judged so, because it was one o'clock before I could leave Dad's office to get some lunch. He and Dick insisted on holding me there till quarter past."

Brother looked at Sister. Sister looked at Brother. They had both forgotten they meant to telephone Ralph at half-past twelve!

"Don't worry over it, Brother," said Ralph, laughing. "No serious harm was done, old chap. I made Dad tell me the mysterious reason of the wait, and when you didn't 'phone in we all three concluded the party had been too much for you. I'm glad you liked the dog."

"Oh, yes!" Brother seized upon this safe topic. "It is the nicest dog, Ralph. And I did mean to say thank you,' only I forgot."

After Daddy Morrison and Ralph and Dick had gone off to the station, Brother and Sister began to have queer feelings. Yes'm, they both felt "somehow different," as Brother said.

"I don't want to clear off the table," complained Sister, drawing pictures on the tablecloth with a fork, a practice which Molly had always sternly forbidden.

"Neither do I," agreed Brother. "Let's go out in the barn and play."

"Jimmie won't like it," suggested Sister, taking up a cup so carelessly that some of the coffee left in it slopped over on the clean cloth.

"Jimmie doesn't own the barn," sniffed Brother crossly. "I guess we can just play in it without hurting any of his stuff."

"Here, here, what are you talking so long about?" demanded Molly good-naturedly.

She came to the dining-room door and inspected the table critically.

"Just as I thought," she said grimly. "Too much party yesterday! Sister, give me that cup and stop marking the cloth. Run off and play, both of you, till you get over being cross. I'd rather do the work myself than listen to you grumble."

Thus dismissed, Brother and Sister wandered off to the barn. They ought to have felt happy with the extra time for play, but, for some reason, they were decidedly uncomfortable.

"Everybody's busy," grumbled Brother. "Nobody cares what we do. Louise and Grace are sewing, and Mother is going to make strawberry jam. Let's try the rings, Betty."

They were inside the old barn now, and the swinging rings had always fascinated Sister. But she knew that Jimmie had said they were not to touch them, and indeed Daddy Morrison had warned the children not to play in the barn unless some of the older boys were with them.

"It is really Jimmie's and Ralph's gymnasium," he had explained. "They know how to use the apparatus, and you don't. When you are older, Jimmie will teach you and you may play there all you wish."

Sister looked longingly at the rings when Brother suggested them.

"Where's Jimmie?" she asked cautiously.

"Up in his room studying," answered Brother confidently.

Jimmie had been "conditioned" in the June examinations, and now spent part of every vacation day studying so that he might take another test before school opened in the fall.

"All right," agreed Sister, assured that Jimmie was not likely to walk in upon them. "How'll we get the rings untied?"

The rings were fastened up out of the way, tied to a nail on the side wall, so that when not in use they did not take up any room. Jimmie could reach this nail easily, but, of course, it was far above Brother's head.

"I'll get the step-ladder," announced Brother confidently. "You hold it for me."

The step-ladder was an old one and inclined to wobble. Brother mounted it slowly, and Sister sat down on the lowest step to hold it steady. Her weight was not enough to anchor the ladder, and it still shook crazily when Brother reached the highest step and stood on his tiptoes to reach the string that held the swings on the nail.

"What are you kids up to now?" a voice asked suddenly.

It was Jimmie! He had come out to the barn to get a book he had left in the corner cupboard.

Sister jumped to her feet, startled. Her elbow brushed the wobbily ladder and over it went, carrying Brother with it. He was too surprised to cry out.

"Are you hurt? Of all the crazy actions?" Jimmie scolded vigorously as he rushed to his small brother's rescue.

Fortunately for him, Brother had landed on one of the heavy, thick, quilted pads that were on the floor. The boys used them when on the apparatus in case they fell. Brother was not hurt at all, but he was frightened, and when Jimmie picked him up he was crying bitterly.

"I've a good mind to tell Father," continued Jimmie, who, of the three older boys, was less inclined to leniency with the performances of Brother and Sister. "Next time you might be badly hurt, and then it would be too late to punish you. Come here, Sister."

Sister came reluctantly.

"What were you trying to do?" said Jimmie grimly.

"Trying to use the swinging rings," answered Sister meekly.

"There's nothing to do," wailed Brother forlornly. "Everybody's busy and no one wants to play. And you don't own this barn, Jimmie Morrison—so there!"

"Perhaps I don't," retorted Jimmie. "But Dad happens to have given me the use of it. And you're going to stay out if I have to put a padlock on the door. You've got all outdoors to play in—can't you find something pleasant to do?"

"Betty! Roddy!" called Nellie Yarrow from her side of the hedge. "Betty! Come on out, I want to tell you something."

Brother and Sister ran toward the door.

"Wait a second!" shouted Jimmie. "Turn around."

They looked back at him. He was smiling.

"No hard feelings?" he suggested.

Sister dimpled and Brother laughed.

"No hard feelings," they chuckled and ran on down to the hedge.

That was the way the Morrison family always smoothed out their disputes. There was so many of them that they really could not be expected to be always pleasant and never quarrel, but every disagreement was, sooner or later, sure to end with the cheerful announcement, "No hard feelings."

"I suppose they ought to have a place of their own to play in," said Jimmie to himself when the children had gone. "I wonder if—"

He had an idea which for the present he meant to keep to himself.

CHAPTER X

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

"Hello!" Nellie Yarrow greeted Brother and Sister. "What do you think?"

"What?" asked Sister, apparently unable to think.

Nellie Yarrow pointed her finger as one having important news to tell.

"The haunted house is rented!" she said, excitedly.

The "haunted" house was an object of curiosity to every child in Ridgeway. It was a small, shabby brown shingled dwelling on one of the side streets, and it was whispered that a man had once seen a "ghost" sitting at one of the windows. That was enough. Ever after no boy or girl would go past the house at night, if it were possible to avoid it, and the more timid ran by it even

in the day time. Of course they should have known there are no such things as "ghosts," but some of them didn't.

"Who is going to live in it?" asked Sister curiously. "Don't you suppose they will be afraid?"

"Well, I wouldn't live in it," declared Nellie positively. "Some folks don't care anything about ghosts, though. Let's go down and watch 'em carry in the furniture."

Not many new families moved into Ridgeway during the year, and a June moving was something of an event. The children found a little group of folk watching the green van backed up to the gate. Two colored men were carrying in furniture, and an old lady with her head tied up in a towel was sweeping off the narrow front porch.

"Gee, she's got a parrot!" cried a ragged, redheaded little boy who was trying to walk on top of the sharp pickets.

He was barefooted and the pickets were very sharp, so when the moving—van man, having put down the parrot and its cage on the porch, pretended to run straight toward him, the boy lost his balance and fell. He was up in a moment and running down the street as fast as though the furniture man were really chasing him.

"Sister!" Brother spoke excitedly. "That's the little boy I told you about. We saw him downtown, Louise and I, when we were buying things for the fishpond for my birthday; remember? Only he didn't have a rag on his foot today."

"He used to be in my class at school," said Nellie. "Oh, look at all the boxes of books!"

Brother meant to ask Nellie what the redheaded boy's name was, but she had danced out to the van to see how large it was inside, and when she came back Brother had forgotten his question.

"My father says an old lady is going to live here," volunteered Francis Rider, a freckle-faced lad of ten or twelve. "She lives all by herself, and she doesn't like noise. Her name is Miss Putnam."

Neither, they were to learn, did Miss Putnam like company, especially that of boys and girls.

When the last piece of furniture had been carried in, and the van had driven creakingly off down the street, the old lady, with her head tied in the towel, was seen approaching the fence.

"That's Miss Putnam," whispered Francis.

"Get off that fence!" cried Miss Putnam, brandishing her broom. "Get off! I'm not going to have my fence broken down by a parcel of young ones. Go on home, I tell you!"

The children scrambled down and scattered like leaves. Francis, when he was a safe distance up the street, put out his tongue and made a face at Miss Putnam. The old lady continued to stand by the gate and shake her broom threateningly as long as there was a child in sight.

"The Collins house is rented at last," said Daddy Morrison at the supper table that night. "I came through there on my way home from the station, and there was a light in the kitchen window. I wonder who has taken it?"

"I know, Daddy," answered Louise quickly. "An aunt of Mrs. Collins has rented it. She is a Miss Putnam and she makes lovely braided rugs for the art and craft shops in the city. Sue Loftis told me."

"Well, she's cross as—as anything!" struck in Brother severely. "She chased us all off her fence this morning; didn't she, Betty?"

"Yes, she did," nodded Sister. "And we weren't doing a thing 'cept watch her move in. Francis Rider stuck out his tongue at her, and she called him a 'brat.'"

Daddy Morrison glanced at her sharply.

"Don't let me hear of either of you annoying Miss Putnam in any way," he said sternly. "I know how children can sometimes, without meaning it, bother an elderly and crochety person. Miss Putnam has every right to keep her house and yard for herself, and if she is 'cross,' as you call it, that is her affair, too. My advice to you youngsters is to stay away from the Collins house."

"Now will you be good?" said Ralph, catching Sister by her short skirts as she attempted to slip past him as he sat in one of the comfortable porch rockers.

The family had scattered after supper, and only Ralph and Jimmie were on the front porch.

"The day after a party is always unlucky," observed Jimmie, tweaking his little sister's hair-ribbon playfully. "You and Brother have had more than your share of scolding today, haven't you, Sister?"

To his surprise, and Ralph's, Sister's small foot in its patent leather slipper and white sock struck at him viciously.

"Why, Elizabeth Morrison!" exclaimed Ralph, lifting the little girl to his lap and holding her firmly there in spite of her struggles. "I'm astonished at you. What are you kicking Jimmie for?"

"Go way!" cried Sister furiously, as Jimmie tried to see her face. "Go way—you're a mean, hateful boy!"

"Quit it!" commanded Ralph, giving her a little shake. "Stop acting like this, Sister, or I'll take you in and put you to bed!"

Sister knew he was quite capable of doing this very thing and she stopped struggling.

"Jimmie is just as mean!" she sobbed, burying her head in Ralph's coat.

"What have I done?" demanded Jimmie, much surprised.

"You've gone and put a padlock on the barn door!" flashed Sister, sitting up and drying her eyes.

Jimmie laughed, and Ralph laughed a little too.

"Well, I haven't locked the door for the reason you think," explained Jimmie kindly. "It isn't just to keep you and Brother out, Sister. I'm making you something nice, and I don't want you to see it until it is all finished."

"All right," conceded Sister graciously. "I thought maybe you didn't want Brother and me to play in the barn."

"No hard feelings, then?" inquired Jimmie, holding out his hand.

And—"No hard feelings," admitted Sister, smiling after the "salt-water shower."

CHAPTER XI

JIMMIE'S SURPRISE

The "haunted" house continued to be an attraction to the children of the neighborhood even after Miss Putnam moved in, and the ghost might reasonably be supposed to have moved out. Alas, it was Miss Putnam herself who now supplied the thrills.

Miss Putnam, you see, had never had much to do with children, and she thought she disliked them very much indeed. Boys, in her opinion, made a great deal of noise and girls always giggled and were silly. So whenever she saw a child hanging over her gate, or even stopping to glance at her house, she was apt to come charging out at them with a broom. The younger ones were afraid of her and the older, larger boys naughtily enjoyed provoking the poor old lady. So it was soon a common sight to see several boys flying up the street, Miss Putnam after them, waving her broom wildly.

Brother and Sister, mindful of Daddy Morrison's warning, never actually did anything to make Miss Putnam chase them. But it must be confessed that they used to walk through the street on which she lived, in the hope of seeing her chase someone. Ridgeway was a quiet place in summer time, and any excitement was welcome.

For several days after Sister's outburst because of the locked barn door, Jimmie worked away busily in his beloved gymnasium. He would not let either Brother or Sister as much as put their noses inside the door, and when they tried to find out from Molly what he was doing—for Molly could usually be depended upon to know what everyone in the family was up to—she simply shook her head and said she had promised not to tell.

"I wish," said Sister for the tenth time one warm morning, "I wish there was something new to do."

"So do I," agreed Brother. "There's Jimmie—he's beckoning to us."

Jimmie stood in the barn doorway, motioning the children to come in.

Brother and Sister jumped down the three back steps in one leap and raced toward the barn.

"Want to see what I've been making?" asked Jimmie proudly, "Come on in, and look—there!"

The tools from the carpenter's bench which occupied one side of the barn were scattered about on the floor where Jimmie had been using them. All Brother and Sister could see was a wide, rather shallow box, painted a dark green.

"Is it—is it a boat?" ventured Sister doubtfully.

"What's it for?" asked Brother.

"It's for you to play with," explained Jimmie. "I thought maybe you would help me carry it out under the horsechestnut tree in the side yard."

"But how do we play with it?" insisted Brother. "Is it a game, Jimmie?"

"Put your hand in that bag back of you," directed Jimmie. "Perhaps then you can guess."

A burlap bag, opened, stood close to Sister. She and Brother plunged their hands in and drew them out filled with something that trickled swiftly through their fingers.

"Sand!" they shouted. "Seashore sand! Oh, Jimmie, is it a sandbox?"

Jimmie nodded, smiling. He knew they had long wanted a sandbox, and like the dear, good brother he was, he had spent his mornings sawing and fitting and smoothing off boards to make a nice, strong box.

"What fun!" Sister bounced up and down with pleasure. "Can we play with it right away?"

"Don't know why not," said Jimmie. "You two take one end, and we'll carry it out under the tree. Mother thought that was the best place because it will be shady most of the day for you."

They carried the box out to the tree, and then Jimmie brought the bag of sand on the wheelbarrow and dumped it into the box.

"Just like the seashore!" beamed Brother. "Thank you ever so much, Jimmie."

"Yes, thank you ever so much, Jimmie," echoed Sister, jumping up and standing on tiptoe to kiss Jimmie. "It's the nicest box!"

Jimmie pretended that it wasn't much to do, but of course he was very much pleased that his little brother and sister should be so delighted. Big brothers often pretend that they don't want anyone to make a fuss over the presents they give or the nice things they do, but just the same they are secretly glad when their efforts are appreciated.

"Here's fifty cents for each of you," announced Jimmie, pulling some change from his pocket and handing two quarters to Brother and a shiny half-dollar to Sister. "If Mother is willing for you to go downtown you can get some sand-toys."

Mother Morrison was willing they should go if they would remember to be careful about automobiles and if they would promise to be back within an hour.

The Morrison house was not very near the section of Ridgeway which contained the shops and stores, but the children often took the long walk alone. There were no trolleys to be careful about, except the one line that ran to the city, but the automobile traffic was rather heavy and one had to remember to stop and look both ways before crossing a street.

"Let's take Brownie with us," suggested Brother, when they were ready to start out to spend their wealth. "We can carry him if he gets tired."

The fat little collie puppy wagged his tail cordially. He loved to go walking and felt that too often he was neglected when he should have been invited. He always wore his silver collar, and Louise had given Brother a little leather leash that could be snapped on when he took the dog outside the yard.

"Want to go, Brownie?" asked Sister. "Want to go out?"

Brownie barked sharply. Indeed, he did want to go!

Brother and Sister took turns leading him, and before they had gone very far they met Nellie Yarrow. She offered to go with them and she was much interested to hear that there was a new sandbox in the Morrison yard.

"I'll come over and play with you this afternoon," she promised. "Let me lead Brownie, Roddy?"

Brother gave her the leash, watching her anxiously. Nellie was sometimes careless with other people's property, he had learned, though she was so generous with her own it was hard to refuse her anything.

"Don't let him get away," he cautioned.

Nellie opened her mouth to say "I won't," when with a sudden jerk Brownie tore the leather line from her hand and dashed into the road.

"Here comes a big motor-truck!" screamed Sister. "Brownie will be run over and killed!"

CHAPTER XII

A LITTLE SHOPPING

The foolish little puppy crouched down directly in the path of the lumbering motor-truck. The children could feel the ground quivering as the weight of the heavy wheels jarred at every turn.

Brother forgot that he had promised to be careful about automobiles. He forgot that, bad as it would be for a motor-driver to run over a puppy dog, it would be twenty times worse for him to run down a little boy. He forgot everything except the fact that his dog was in danger!

"Look out!" shrieked Nellie Yarrow. "Roddy, come back!"

A huge red touring car, filled with laughing girls, whizzed past him, and after that a light delivery car that had to swerve sharply to avoid striking him. As Brother reached the dog he thought the motor-truck was going to roll right over him, and he closed his eyes and made a grab for Brownie. When he opened them, the truck was standing still, two wheels in the ditch, and three men were climbing down and starting toward him.

"Are you hurt, Roddy?" cried Sister, skipping into the road, followed by Nellie. "My, I thought that truck was going to run over you sure!"

"Come out of the road, you kids!" ordered one of the men roughly, pushing the three children not unkindly over in the direction of the ditch. "This is no place to stand and talk—hasn't your mother ever told you to keep out of the streets?"

The driver of the truck, who was a young man with blue eyes and a quick smile, patted Brownie on the head gently.

"I saw the dog," he explained to Brother. "I wouldn't have run over him, anyway. Next time, no matter what happens, don't you run into the road. Cars going the other way might have struck you, and I didn't know which way you were going to jump after you got the dog. No driver wants to run over a dog if he can help it, and you children only make matters worse by dashing in among traffic."

"I didn't mean to," said Brother sorrowfully. "Only I didn't want Brownie to get hurt. I hardly ever dash among traffic, do I, Sister?"

"No, he doesn't," declared Sister loyally, while Nellie stood silently by. "Mother always makes us promise to be careful 'bout dashing."

The three men laughed.

"Well, as long as you don't make it a practice, we won't count this time," said the man who had told them not to stand talking in the road. "Now scoot back to the sidewalk—or, here, George, you take them over. That's a nice dog you have."

George, it proved, was the driver, and he took Sister by one hand and Brother by the other. Nellie held Sister's other hand and Brother carried Brownie, and in this order they made their way safely back to the pavement on the other side of the street.

"Good-bye, and don't forget about keeping out of the street," said the truck-driver cheerfully, when he had them neatly lined up on the curb.

They watched him run back to his machine—as Brother observed, he didn't look to see whether any motor-cars were likely to run him down, but then, of course, he was grown up and used to them—saw him mount to the high seat, and waved good-bye to all three men. Then they walked on, for the sand-toys were still to be bought.

Brother and Sister were the most careful of shoppers, and with Nellie to help them by suggestions, they managed to find a set of tin sand-dishes, a windmill that pumped sand, a little iron dumpcart that would be very useful to carry loads, and a string of tin buckets that went up and down on a chain and filled with sand and emptied again as long as anyone would turn the handle.

"Come over after lunch and we'll play," said Sister as Nellie left them at her own hedge.

Nellie did come over and the three children had a wonderful time with the new toys and the clean white sand, while Brownie slept comfortably under the tree. Before Nellie was ready to go home, however, a thunder storm came up and her mother called her to come in. Mother Morrison came out and helped Brother and Sister to carry their box into the barn, where the sand would not get wet.

"You don't want to play with the sandbox all the time, dearies," she said, leading the way back to the house. "If you play too steadily with anything, presently you will find that you are growing tired of it. Now play on the porch, or find something nice to do in the house, and tomorrow Jimmie will put the box under the tree again for you."

It was very warm and sticky, and Sister tumbled into the comfortable porch swing, meaning to stay there just a few minutes. She fell asleep and slept all through the storm, waking up a little cross, as one is apt to do on a hot summer afternoon. The rain had stopped and Brother had gone over to see Grandmother Hastings.

"Hello, Sister," Louise greeted her when she raised a flushed, warm face and touseled hair from the canvas cushions. "You've had a fine nap. Want me to go upstairs with you and help you find a clean dress?"

"No," said Sister a bit crossly.

"You'll feel much better, honey, when your face is washed and you have on a thinner frock," urged Louise, putting down her knitting. "Come upstairs like a good girl, and I'll tell you what I saw Miss Putnam doing as I came past her house this afternoon."

Sister toiled upstairs after Louise, feeling much abused. She had not intended to take a nap, and now here she had slept away good playtime and was certainly warmer and more uncomfortable than she had been before she went to sleep.

But after Louise had bathed her face and hands in cool water and had brushed her hair and buttoned her into a pretty white dress with blue spots, Sister was her own sunny self. She had not been thoroughly awake, you see, and that was the reason she felt a little cross.

"What was Miss Putnam doing?" she asked curiously, watching Louise fold up the frock she had taken off.

"She was out in her yard nailing something on the fence," said Louise. "I saw her when I was a block away, hammering as though her life depended on it. A crowd of boys were watching her—at a safe distance—and when I came near enough I saw she had a roll of wire in the yard. She was nailing barbwire along the fence pickets!"

"How mean!" scolded Sister. "No one wants to climb over her old fence, or swing on her gate."

"Well, I think it is a shame the way the boys torment her," declared Louise severely. "Jimmie says he caught a little red-headed boy the other day throwing old tin cans over her fence. You know what Daddy would say if he ever thought you or Brother did anything like that."

"We don't," Sister assured her earnestly. "We never bother Miss Putnam."

CHAPTER XIII

A BIG DISAPPOINTMENT

Fourth of July, always a glorious holiday in the Morrison household, came and was celebrated by a family picnic which gave Brother and Sister something to talk about for days afterward. Their sandbox, too, kept them busy and for a long time Jimmie never had to warn them not to touch the gymnasium apparatus in the barn.

Daddy Morrison and Dick and Ralph continued to go every day to the city and Jimmie worked faithfully at his books, determined to begin the fall school term without a condition. As captain of the football team it was necessary for him to make a good showing in his lessons as well as in athletics.

Louise and Grace perhaps enjoyed the vacation time more than any other members of the family. They would be sophomores when they returned to high school in September, and while they were willing to study hard then, they meant to have all the fun they could before they were bound down to books and lessons again.

"Where you going?" Sister asked one night, finding Louise prinking before the hall mirror and

Grace counting change from her mesh bag.

"Out," answered Louise serenely, pulling her pretty hair more over her ears.

"I know—to the movies!" guessed Brother. "Can't we go? Oh, please, Louise—you said you'd take us sometime!"

"Oh, yes, Louise, can't we go?" teased Sister. "I never went to the movies at night," she added pleadingly.

"You can't go," said Louise reasonably enough. "We didn't go when we were little like you. Don't hang on me, please, Sister; it's too hot."

"I think you're mean!" stormed Brother. "Mother, can't we go to the movies?"

Mother Morrison, who had been upstairs to get her fan, was going with Louise and Grace. She shook her head to Brother's question.

"My dearies, of course you can't go at night," she said firmly. "I want you to be good children and go to bed when the clock strikes eight. Ralph promised to come up and see you. Kiss Mother good-night, Sister, and be a good girl."

Left alone, Brother and Sister sat down on the front stairs. Molly was out and Daddy Morrison and Dick had gone to a lodge meeting. Jimmie was studying up in his room and Ralph was out in the barn putting some things away.

"There's that old clock!" said Brother crossly as the Grandfather's clock on the stair landing boomed the hour.

Eight slow, deep strokes—eight o'clock.

Sister settled herself more firmly against the banister railings.

"I'm not going to bed," she announced flatly. "If everybody can go to the movies 'cept me, I don't think it's fair, so there!"

Just how she expected to even things up by refusing to go to bed Sister did not explain. Perhaps she didn't know. Anyway, Brother said he wasn't going to bed either. Ralph came in at half-past eight to find them both playing checkers on the living-room floor.

"Thought you went to bed at eight o'clock," said Ralph, surprised. "Mother say you might stay up tonight?"

"No, she didn't," admitted Brother, "but she went to the movies with Louise and Grace. Everybody is having fun and we're not."

Ralph didn't scold. He merely closed up the checkerboard and put it away in the book-case drawer with the box of checkers. Then he lifted Sister to his lap and put an arm around Brother.

"Poor chicks, you do feel abused; don't you?" he said comfortably. "But I'll tell you something—you wouldn't like going to the movies at night; you would go to sleep after a little while and lose half the pictures. Now suppose I take you this Saturday afternoon. How will that do?"

"Will you take us, Ralph?" cried Sister. "Down to the Majestic?"

This was the largest motion picture theatre in Ridgeway.

"I'll take you both to the Majestic next Saturday afternoon," promised Ralph, "if you will go to bed without any more fuss tonight."

Both children were delighted with the thought of an afternoon's enjoyment with Ralph and they trotted up to bed with him as pleasantly as though going to bed were a pleasure. Grownups will tell you it is, but when you are five and six this is difficult to believe.

Unfortunately Brother and Sister were doomed to another disappointment. Before Saturday afternoon came, Ralph remembered that he had promised to play tennis with a friend and he could not break the engagement, because to do so would spoil the afternoon for eight or ten people who counted on him for games.

"I'm just as sorry as I can be," Ralph told Brother and Sister earnestly. "I don't see how I could forget I promised Fred Holmes to play with him. If you want to wait another week for me, I'll give you the money for ice-cream sodas."

Grandmother Hastings and Mother Morrison had gone to the city, the girls had company, Molly was lying down with a headache—there seemed to be no one to take the children to the matinee.

"I guess we'll have to go buy sodas," agreed Brother disconsolately. "Only if I don't go to movies pretty soon, I'll—I'll—I don't know what I'll do!"

"I know," said Sister, dimpling mischievously. "I'll tell you, Roddy."

"You be good, Sister," warned Ralph, eyeing her a bit anxiously. "I couldn't take a naughty little girl to the movies, you know."

CHAPTER XIV

TWO IN TROUBLE

Ralph knew that Sister could put queer ideas into Brother's head, and he hoped that the fun of going downtown, and buying ice-cream soda at the drug store, might cause Sister to forget whatever she had in mind.

When he came home from his tennis game he found both children playing in the sandbox, and as they were very good the rest of that afternoon and evening and all day Sunday, Ralph decided that Sister was not going to be naughty or get Brother to help her to do anything she should not.

Monday evening Mother and Daddy Morrison went through the hedge into Dr. Yarrow's house to visit the doctor and his wife. Brother and Sister were told to run in and visit Grandmother Hastings until eight o'clock, their bedtime.

"Can we take Brownie?" begged Sister. "Grandmother says he is the nicest dog!"

So Brownie, who was now three times the size he had been when Ralph brought him home in the basket, was allowed to go calling, too.

"Grandma," said Sister, when Grandmother Hastings had answered their knock on her screen door, and had hugged and kissed them both. "Grandma, couldn't we go to the movies?"

Now Grandmother Hastings was a darling grandmother who loved to do whatever her grandchildren asked of her. It never entered her dear head that Mother Morrison might not wish Brother and Sister to go to the movies at night. She only thought how they would enjoy the pictures, and although she disliked going out at night herself, she said that she would take Brother and Sister.

"We can't go downtown to the Majestic," she said, "for that is too far for me to walk. We'll have to go over to the nice little theatre on Dollmer Avenue. If we go right away, we can be home early."

Sister lagged a little behind her grandmother and brother as they started for the theatre. She was stuffing Brownie into her roomy middy blouse. He was rather a large puppy to squeeze into such a place, but Sister managed it somehow. Grandmother Hastings supposed that the dog had been left on the porch.

The theatre was dark, for the pictures were being shown on the screen when they reached it, and Grandmother Hastings had to feel her way down the aisle, Brother and Sister clinging to her skirts. The electric fans were going, but it was warm and close, and Grandmother wished longingly for her own cool parlor. But Brother and Sister thought everything about the movie theatre beautiful.

"Do you suppose Brownie likes it?" whispered Brother, who sat next to Sister. Grandmother was on his other side.

"He feels kind of hot," admitted Sister, who could not have been very comfortable with the heavy dog inside her blouse. "But I think he likes it."

Brownie had his head stuck halfway out, and he probably wondered where he was. It was so dark that there was little danger of anyone discovering him. A dog in a motion-picture house is about as popular, you know, as Mary's lamb was in school. That is, he isn't popular at all.

Brownie might have gone to the movies and gone home again without anyone ever having been the wiser, if there had not been a film shown that night that no regular dog could look at and not bark.

"Oh, look at the big cat!" whispered Sister excitedly.

Surely enough, a large cat sat on the fence, and, as they watched, a huge collie dog, with a beautiful plumy tail, came marching around the corner.

He spied the cat and dashed for her. She began to run, on the screen, of course. The

audience in the movie house began to laugh, for the dog in his first jump had upset a bucket of paint. The people in the theatre were sure they were going to see a funny picture.

But Brownie had seen the cat, too. He knew cats, and there were many in his neighborhood he meant to chase as soon as he was old enough to make them afraid of him. He scratched vigorously on Sister's blouse and whined.

"Ki-yi!" he yelped, as though saying: "Ki-yi! I'll bet I could catch that cat!"

Barking shrilly, he scrambled out from Sister's middy, shook himself free of her arms, and tore down the aisle of the theatre, intent on catching the fluffy cat.

"Ki-yi!" he continued to call joyously.

"Brownie! Here, Brownie!" called Sister frantically. "Brownie, come back here!"

The theatre was in an uproar in a minute. Ladies began to shriek that the dog was mad, and some of them stood upon the seats and cried out. The men who tried to catch Brownie only made him bark more, and the louder he barked the more the ladies shrieked. Finally they stopped the picture and turned on the lights.

"Rhodes and Elizabeth Morrison!" said someone sternly. "What are you doing here?"

There, across the aisle from Grandmother Hastings and Brother and Sister, sat Daddy and Mother Morrison with Dr. and Mrs. Yarrow. They had come to the movies, too!

"Is that dog Brownie?" asked Daddy Morrison, coming over to them.

Everyone had left his seat and the aisle was in confusion; people talking and arguing and advising one another.

Sister nodded miserably. She felt very small and unhappy.

"Rhodes, go down and get Brownie at once!" commanded Daddy Morrison.

When they were naughty, Brother and Sister were always called by their "truly" names, you see.

"I'll go get him," gulped Sister. "I brought him—Roddy didn't want me to."

Brownie came willingly enough to Sister and she gathered him up in her arms. He may have wondered, in his doggie mind, what all the fuss was about and what had become of the fluffy cat, but he was getting used to having his fun abruptly ended.

"I didn't know you brought the dog, dear," said Grandmother Hastings, breaking a grim silence as they walked home. "And did you know Mother wasn't willing to have you go at night when you asked me to take you?"

Poor little Sister had to confess that she had asked Grandmother to take them because she knew that in no other way could they get to the movies at night. Grandmother Hastings never scolded, but her grandchildren hated to know that she was disappointed in them.

No one scolded Brother and Sister very much that night. They were put to bed, and the next morning Daddy Morrison called them into his "den" before he left for the office, and told them that for a week they could not go out of their own yard.

"And I s'pose we can't go with Ralph Saturday," wailed Sister.

CHAPTER XV

TROUBLE AGAIN

However, they were allowed to go with Ralph to the movies the next Saturday. Ralph himself explained to Daddy Morrison that he had promised to take them and then found he had a previous engagement. He thought, and Daddy Morrison did, too, that having to stay in the yard for a whole week was punishment enough even if one exception was permitted.

So Brother and Sister went down to the "big" theatre with Ralph the next Saturday afternoon, and then they had to stay in their yard all day Sunday and all day Monday, and after that they might again go where they pleased.

"Let's go see if Norman Crane's aunt sent him a birthday present," suggested Sister the first

morning they were free to leave the yard.

Norman Crane was a little friend who lived several blocks away, and whose aunt in New York City sent him wonderful presents at Christmas time and on his birthday. He had had a party a few days before, and of course Brother and Sister could not go—all because they would go to those unlucky movies!

Brother was willing to stop at Norman's house, but when they reached there they found Norman had gone to the city with his mother for a day's shopping.

"I smell tar," declared Brother, as they came down the steps and turned into the street where Miss Putnam lived in the haunted house—only it wasn't called that any longer. "Oh, look, Betty, they're mending something."

There was a little group of children about a big pot of boiling tar and workmen were mending the roofs of three or four houses that were built exactly alike and were owned by the same man. These houses were always repaired and painted at the same time every year.

Nearest to the boiling pot—indeed, with his red head almost in the hot steam—was the little boy Brother and Sister had noticed walking on Miss Putnam's picket fence. A puddle of tar had splashed over on the ground and the red-headed boy was stirring it with a stick held between his bare toes.

"Now don't hang around here all day," said one of the workmen, kindly enough. "Run away before you get burned. Hey, there, Red! Do you want to blister your foot?"

The red-haired lad grinned mischievously.

"I'd hate to spoil my shoes," he jeered, "but you watch and I'll kick over your old pot! I can, just as easy."

The other children drew nearer, half-believing the boy would tip over the pot of boiling tar.

"Here," said another and younger workman, "if we give each of you a little on a stick will you promise to go off and leave us in peace?"

There was an eager chorus of promises, and the good-natured young roofer actually stuck a little ball of the soft tar on each stick thrust at him and watched the small army of boys and girls march up the street, smiling.

"That Mickey Gaffney thinks he's smart," said Nellie Yarrow, who had found Brother and Sister in the crowd, as the red-headed boy dashed past them, waving his stick of tar wildly and shouting like an Indian.

"Do you know him?" asked Sister. "Doesn't he ever wear shoes?"

"I guess so—I don't know. I don't like him," replied Nellie indifferently.

"I don't believe he has any shoes, not even for Sunday," Brother said to himself. "His coat was all torn and his mother sewed his pants up with another kind of cloth so that it shows. I wonder where 'bouts he lives?"

He opened his mouth to ask Nellie, when Miss Putnam swooped down to the fence as they were passing her house.

"Go way!" she called, leaving her weeding to wave a rake at them. "Go 'long with you! Don't you drop any of that messy tar on my sidewalk!"

"What lovely flowers!" whispered Sister as they obediently hurried past.

Indeed, Miss Putnam had made a beautiful garden and lawn of her small yard, and she did all the work of taking care of it herself.

Sister and Brother carried their tar home with them and left it in the sand heap. Jimmie had six boys playing in the gymnasium with him and they all stayed to lunch. Molly and Mother Morrison were used to having unexpected guests, and no matter how many there were, in some mysterious manner plenty of good things to eat appeared on the table.

"Can we come out and watch you?" asked Brother when the boys were going back to the barn.

"We're going swimming," answered Jimmie.

"Can't we go swimming?" inquired Sister hopefully.

"You can NOT!" retorted Jimmie. "Why don't you take a nap, or—something?"

"Come on out to the barn, Roddy," Sister urged Brother when Jimmie and his friends had gone whistling on their way to the river.

"Now don't you be meddling with any of those things out there," warned Molly, clearing the table. "Your brother doesn't like you to touch his exercises, you know."

Molly called all the apparatus the boys used "exercises."

"We're not going to touch 'em!" declared Sister. "We're only going to look."

Jimmie seldom snapped his padlock, for lately the children had not bothered the gymnasium in the barn. They found the door open this afternoon.

"Bet you can't jump off that!" said Sister, pointing to a home-made "horse" that Jimmie had ingeniously contrived.

(If you don't know the kind of "horse" they use in a gymnasium, ask your big brother or sister.)

"Bet I can!" challenged Brother.

They took turns jumping until they were tired, and they went about poking their little fingers and noses into whatever they could find to examine. Sister's investigations ended sadly enough, for she succeeded in pulling down a tray of butterflies that Jimmie was mounting (he had thought the gymnasium a safe place to keep them out of everyone's way), and now broken glass and crumbled butterflies were scattered all over the floor.

"Now you've done it!" cried Brother. "Jimmie will be just as mad!"

They found an old broom and swept the broken glass under one of the heavy floor pads. Then, very much subdued, they went into the house and were so quiet for the rest of the afternoon and through supper that Mother Morrison wondered if they were sick.

They were having dessert when the doorbell rang and Molly went to the door. She came back in a moment, her eyes round with wonder and looking rather frightened.

"It's Mr. Dougherty, sir," she said to Daddy Morrison. "He wants to see you."

Mr. Dougherty was Ridgeway's one and only policeman.

CHAPTER XVI

MISS PUTNAM COMPLAINS

At the mention of the policeman's name, Sister had given a gasp. No one noticed her as Daddy Morrison pushed back his chair and went into the hall.

"I wonder what he wants?" mused Mother Morrison, helping Ralph to blackberries.

"Sister, you're spilling juice on the tablecloth," reproved Dick. "Look out, there goes another spot."

Sister was trying to eat her berries, and also plan what to say when the policeman should send for her. She was sure that he had heard about the broken case of butterflies, for Jimmie, when greatly provoked at her long ago, had threatened to tell Mr. Dougherty of her next misdeed.

"I like Mr. Dougherty," announced Brother sweetly.

No broken butterflies lay heavy on HIS conscience.

Louise and Grace finished their dessert and were excused to go upstairs. The others lingered at the table because Daddy Morrison and Mr. Dougherty had gone into the living-room and they did not wish to disturb them.

"Lelia," called Daddy Morrison presently, "will you come here for a moment?"

Leila was Mother Morrison's name, and she rose and went across the hall quickly.

There was a low murmur of talk, an exclamation from Mother Morrison, and then the voice of Mr. Dougherty in the hall.

"Then I'm to tell the Chief that you'll drop in tonight?" he was saying. "All right, sir, that'll be satisfactory, of course. I'm not overly fond of this sort of work, but when a woman makes a

complaint, you know, we haven't much choice."

"I understand," Daddy Morrison's deep, pleasant voice answered. "I'll get at the truth, and tell the Chief I'll be down at the town hall before ten o'clock. Good-night, Dougherty."

"Good-night, sir," said Mr. Dougherty and the screen door slammed.

Daddy Morrison came back to the dining-room.

"Rhodes and Elizabeth, I want to speak to you," he said very gravely. "Come up to my den."

Sister's small face went very white.

"I didn't mean to, honest I didn't, Jimmie!" she cried, hurling herself on that astonished young man and clinging desperately to his coat lapels. "I didn't know they were there till they fell over."

"What ails her?" Jimmie demanded, staring at his father. "What fell over?"

"Your case of butterflies," Brother informed him sadly "We were playing out in the barn and Betty reached up to open a window and the pole knocked the box off."

"Well, I must say—" began Jimmie wrathfully. "I must say! If you two don't learn to leave my things alone—"

"Save your lecture, Jimmie," advised his father quickly. "I didn't know about the butterflies, but I want to ask the children about something else. Come upstairs, now. You, too, Mother."

Brother and Sister followed Mother and Daddy Morrison upstairs, puzzled to know what was to be said to them. If the butterflies made so little difference to anyone—except Jimmie, who was perfectly boiling, it was plain to see—what else was there to scold them about? For that it was to be a scolding neither Brother or Sister doubted—hadn't Daddy called them "Rhodes" and "Elizabeth"?

"Now," said Daddy Morrison, when they were all in the little room he called his den and he had closed the door, although it was a warm night, "what were you doing this afternoon?"

"Playing in the barn," answered Brother. "It wasn't locked, Daddy."

"And then you broke Jimmie's case of butterflies," said Daddy. "What did you do then?"

"We swept the glass under a pad," said Sister, finding her voice. "Did Jimmie tell Mr. Dougherty?"

"Jimmie didn't know, and he certainly would not tell the police," declared Daddy Morrison, smiling a little in spite of his evident anxiety. "Miss Putnam, children, has made a complaint to the police that you tracked fresh tar over her porch and sidewalk, and she wants you to clean it off. That was why Mr. Dougherty came tonight."

"We won't either clean it off!" cried Brother angrily. "Serve her right to clean it off herself; mean old thing!"

"Don't let me hear you talk like that again," said Daddy Morrison sternly. "Did either of you have anything to do with putting tar on her porch or walk?"

"No, sir," replied Brother more meekly.

"But did you PLAY with the tar?" asked Mother Morrison. "Mr. Dougherty told us there were roofers mending the Gillson houses today, and using hot tar."

"Yes, they gave us some," said Brother honestly enough. "Didn't they, Betty? All the children had some, and we went by Miss Putnam's house and she yelled at us."

"But we didn't stop," added Sister. "We went right on and came home, didn't we, Roddy?"

"Yes," nodded Brother. "And that was before lunch, Daddy."

Daddy Morrison looked troubled.

"If you say you did not throw the tar, I believe you," he said gravely. "You may get into mischief and do wrong things, but I am sure you do not tell wrong stories. I don't see how Miss Putnam can be positive enough to give your names to the police, but I am going around to see her now and hear what she has to say. Then I'll stop in at the town hall and see the chief of police."

The telephone rang just then, and he went downstairs. It was only half-past seven, but Mother Morrison insisted that it was time for them to get ready for bed.

"Your father doesn't want you to speak of the tar to any of your playmates," she said as she brushed Sister's hair. "You must be very careful and not say a word against Miss Putnam. People may make mistakes easily, and we'll try to think as kindly of her as we can. Poor old lady! She

must be terribly tormented by the children to dislike them so."

"I wish," wept Sister over her sandals as she unbuckled them, "I wish I hadn't smashed Jimmie's butterflies. Now he's mad at me."

"Well, you know he has asked you not to play in the barn when he isn't there to watch you," suggested Mother Morrison mildly. "However, you can make it up with Jimmie tomorrow; he never holds a grudge."

"Weed the onions for him," advised Brother wisely if sleepily. "He hates weeding."

"Maybe I will," decided Sister. "Daddy said tonight he couldn't go swimming again until he had worked in the garden."

CHAPTER XVII

MAKING UP WITH JIMMIE

Daddy Morrison went to see Miss Putnam after the children had gone to bed. The old lady was very sure that Brother and Sister had thrown the tar and she was so positive in her assertions that finally he asked her how she could be so sure.

"Well, one of the neighbors told me," Miss Putnam said reluctantly. "No, I don't know your children from any of the others, but she does. All children look pretty much alike to me—noisy, scuffling young ones! No, I couldn't tell you the neighbor's name—I wouldn't want to get her into any trouble."

When Daddy Morrison went away, she showed him the tar on her porch and sidewalk.

"Somebody ought to be made to clear it off," said Miss Putnam severely.

The chief of police, at the town hall, was a little angry that a complaint had been made merely on the word of a neighbor, who might easily be mistaken about the children she had seen throwing tar. However, as Brother and Sister said they had nothing to do with it, and Miss Putnam refused to believe them, there was nothing to do but let the complaint stand.

"Keep away from Miss Putnam's house and street," commanded Daddy Morrison at the breakfast table the next morning. "Don't go past her house except when it is absolutely necessary. We're not going to have any more bickering over this matter. Your mother and I believe you and that is all that is necessary. I shall be seriously displeased if I find you are talking it over with outsiders, especially other children."

Ralph and Dick had already taken their way to the station and now Daddy Morrison hurried to get his train.

"Why doesn't he want us to talk about it?" asked Sister, puzzled. "Couldn't I tell Nellie Yarrow?"

"I wouldn't," counseled Mother Morrison. "You see, dear, you can't help feeling that Miss Putnam has been unfair and every time you tell what she has done you will make someone else think she is unfair, too. Your friends will take your part, of course, and while you think Miss Putnam is decidedly 'mean,' she is acting right, according to her own ideas. It is never best to talk much about a quarrel of any kind."

Jimmie, who had been eating his breakfast in silence, rose and looked toward his mother.

"I suppose I have to work in that old garden?" he said aggrievedly.

"You know what your father said," replied Mother Morrison.

Jimmie did not like to weed, and the Morrison garden, when it came his turn, was often sadly neglected. He and Ralph and Dick were responsible for the care of the garden two weeks at a time during the growing season.

"Well, maybe if I stick at it this morning, I can go swimming this afternoon," muttered Jimmie. "Dad didn't say the whole thing had to be weeded today, did he?"

"He wants the new heads of lettuce transplanted, and all the onions weeded," answered Mother Morrison. "You know you were asked to tend to those a week ago, Jimmie."

Jimmie flung himself out of the house in rather a bad temper. He did not like to transplant lettuce and the onions must be weeded by hand. Other vegetables could be handled with a hoe,

or the garden cultivator, but the eight long rows of new onions must be carefully done down on one's hands and knees.

"Jimmie!" said a little voice at his elbow as he got the trowel and the wheelbarrow from the toolhouse. "Jimmie?"

"Well, what do you want?" demanded Jimmie shortly.

"I'll—I'll help you," offered Sister timidly.

"You can't," said Jimmie. "Last time you crammed the lettuce plants in so hard they died over night."

"But I'll bring the water for 'em, in the watering-pot, and I can weed onions—I know how to do that," insisted Sister humbly.

"I won't need the watering-pot," said Jimmie more graciously. "I'll use the hose on them all tonight. I wonder if you could weed the onions?"

"Oh, yes!" Sister assured him eagerly. "You watch me, Jimmie."

She fell on her fat little knees, and began to pull the weeds from a long row of onions.

The sun was hot and the row was very long. Before she reached the middle of it, the perspiration was running down Sister's face, and her hands were damp and grimy.

"Look here," Jimmie called to her anxiously, on his way back for more lettuce plants, "don't you want to rest? And why don't you wear a sunbonnet, or something?"

Sister stood up, straightening her aching little shoulders.

"Sunbonnets are hot," she explained carefully. "And I don't want to rest, Jimmie. I'll go get a drink of water and then I'll weed some more."

"Bring me a drink, too, will you?" Jimmie called after her.

When she brought it he forgot to say thank you because one of his friends had ridden past on his bicycle and this reminded Jimmie that he had meant to do something to his own wheel that morning. So he drank the water Sister carried out to him without a word because he was cross, and when we're cross we do not always remember to be polite.

Sister went steadily at the weeding again, and after a while Jimmie finished the lettuce, and began to weed an onion row himself.

"You can stop if you want to now," he said to Sister presently. "Don't you want to play? I can finish these."

"I'm not going to stop till they're all done," announced Sister. "Molly says the only way to get anything finished is to use plenty of per—perservance!"

Jimmie laughed and glanced at her curiously.

"I guess you mean PERSEVERANCE" he suggested, "Well, Sister, you are certainly fine help. It begins to look as though I could go swimming this afternoon after all."

Surely enough, when Mother Morrison called to them that lunch was ready, they were weeding the last onion row.

"I can finish that in fifteen minutes," declared Jimmie gaily. "You're a brick, Sister! When you want me to do something for you, just mention it, will you?"

Sister beamed. She was hot and tired and she knew her face and hands were streaked and dirty. Brother had spent the morning playing with Nellie Yarrow and Ellis Carr, and Nellie's aunt had taken them to the drug store for ice-cream soda. Yet Sister, far from being sorry for her hot, busy morning in the garden, felt very happy.

"Now you don't mind, do you?" she asked Jimmie anxiously.

"Mind what?" he said, putting the wheelbarrow away in the toolhouse.

"About the butterflies," explained Sister.

"I'd forgotten all about them," declared Jimmie, hugging her.

CHAPTER XVIII

MICKEY GAFFNEY

Brother and Sister were very fond of playing school. They carefully saved all the old pencils and scraps of paper and half-used blank books that Grace and Louise and Jimmie gave them, and many mornings they spent on the porch "going to school."

Neither had ever been to school, and of course they were excited at the prospect of starting in the fall. Brother had had kindergarten lessons at home and he was ready for the first grade, while Sister would have to make her start in the Ridgeway school kindergarten.

"I wish summer would hurry up and go," complained Brother one August day. "Then we could really go to school."

"Well, don't wish that," advised Louise. "Goodness knows you'll be tired of it soon enough! Sister, what are you dragging out here?"

"My blackboard," answered Sister, almost falling over the doorsill as she pulled her blackboard—a gift from Grandmother Hastings—out onto the porch.

"Come on, Grace, we'll go in," proposed Louise, hastily gathering up her work. "If these children are going to play school there won't be any place for us! We'll go up to my room."

"I thought maybe you would be the scholars," said Brother, disappointed. "We never have enough scholars."

Louise was halfway up the stairs.

"You can play the dolls are scholars," she called back.

Mother Morrison had gone over to Grandmother Hastings to help her make blackberry jam, and Louise and Grace had been left in charge of the house.

"Let me be the teacher," begged Sister, when her blackboard was arranged to her liking. "I know how, Roddy."

"Well, all right, you can be teacher first," agreed Brother. "But after you play, then it's my turn."

Sister picked up a book and pointed to the blackboard.

"'Rithmetic class, go to the board," she commanded.

Both she and Brother knew a good deal about what went on in classrooms, because they had listened to the older children recite.

"How much is sixty-eight times ninety-two?" asked Teacher-Sister importantly.

Brother made several marks on the blackboard with the crayon.

"Nine hundred," he answered doubtfully.

"Correct," said the teacher kindly. "Now I'll hear the class in spellin'."

"I wish we had more scholars," complained Brother. "It's no fun with just one; I have to be everything."

"There's that little boy again—maybe he'd play," suggested Sister, pointing to the red-haired, barefooted little boy who stood staring on the walk that led up to the porch.

He could not see through the screens very clearly, but he had heard the voices of the children and, stopping to listen, had drawn nearer and nearer.

"That's Mickey Gaffney," whispered Brother. "Hello, Mickey," he called more loudly. "Want to come play school with us?"

Mickey came up on the steps, and flattened his nose against the screen door.

"I dunno," he said doubtfully. "How do you play?"

Sister pushed open the door for him, and Mickey rather shyly looked about him.

"It's nice and shady in here," he said appreciatively. "You got a blackboard, ain't you?"

"You should say 'have' a blackboard and 'ain't' is dreadful," corrected Sister, blissfully unaware that "dreadful" was not a good word to use. "You can use the chalk if you'll be a scholar, Mickey."

Mickey was anxious to draw on the blackboard and he consented to play "just for a little."

As Brother had said, two scholars were ever so much better than one and they had a beautiful time playing together. Mickey, in spite of his ragged clothes, and bad grammar, knew how to play, and he suggested several new things that Sister and Brother had never done.

"I been to school," boasted Mickey.

The children were anxious to have him stay to lunch with them and Louise, who had heard his voice and who came downstairs to see him, also invited him to stay. But he was too shy, and shuffled off just as Nellie Yarrow bounded up the front steps.

"Wasn't that Mickey Gaffney?" she asked curiously. "I shouldn't think you'd want to play with him. His folks are awful poor, and, besides, his father was arrested last year."

"Mickey isn't to blame for that," retorted Grace quickly. "Don't be a snob, Nellie; Brother and Sister had a good time playing with that little red-headed boy."

"But hardly any of the children play with him," persisted Nellie, who of course went to the public school. "You see last term Mickey was in my room, and he only came till about the middle of October—maybe it was November. Anyway, soon as it got cold he stopped coming.

"The teacher thought he was playing hooky, and she told Mr. Alexander, the principal. And he found out that the reason Mickey didn't come to school was 'cause his father didn't send him."

"Why didn't his father send him?" asked Sister.

"He wouldn't work, and Mickey didn't have any shoes to wear," explained Nellie. "Mr. Alexander got somebody to give Mickey a pair of shoes, but he wouldn't pay any attention to his lessons, and I know he wasn't promoted. I suppose he'll be in the first grade again this year."

Brother and Sister thought a good deal about Mickey after Nellie had gone home. They wondered if he wanted to go to school and whether he wished the summer would hurry so the new term might open.

"He liked to play school, so I guess he likes to go, really," argued Sister. "Playing is different," said Brother wisely. "He didn't have any shoes on this morning, did he?"

"No, that's so," Sister recalled. "And his clothes were all torn and dirty; maybe he hasn't any new suit to wear the first day."

All the Morrison children had always started school in new suits or dresses, and Mother Morrison had promised Brother a new sailor suit and Sister a gingham frock when they started off in September.

"Miss Putnam would say he 'scuffled,'" giggled Sister, remembering that was what Miss Putnam thought all children did with their feet.

"I wonder who really did put the tar on her porch?" murmured Brother. "She'll always think we did it, unless someone tells her something else."

CHAPTER XIX

A VERY SICK DOLL

"Madam," declared Brother seriously, "your child is very ill, I fear!"

He was the "doctor" and had been called to attend Muriel Elsie, Sister's best and largest doll. The children had started this new game one day.

"Oh, Doctor!" fluttered Sister, much worried. "Can't you give her something?"

The doctor sat down on the window-seat and considered.

"You ate all the peppermints up," he told Muriel Elsie's "mother." Then he went on: "And Louise hid the box of chocolates. No, I don't believe I can give her any medicines."

"Yes, you can," urged the little mother, hurriedly. "Go to the drug store; that's where Doctor Yarrow gets all his pills and things."

"Where—where is the drugstore?" stammered the doctor.

He was used to having Sister tell him. She usually planned their games.

"Why, it's—it's—" Sister looked about her desperately. Where should she say the drugstore was? "I know," she cried. "Over to Grandma's—hurry!"

Grandmother Hastings glanced up from her sewing in surprise as Brother and Sister tumbled up the steps of the side porch where she sat.

"Oh, Grandma!" and Sister fell over the Boston fern in her eagerness to explain the play. "Grandma, Muriel Elsie is ever so sick, and Roddy is the doctor; and we have to go to the drugstore to get medicine for her. Have you any? You have, haven't you, Grandma?"

"Dear me," said Grandmother Hastings, adjusting her glasses. "Muriel Elsie is very ill, is she? Well, now, what kind of medicine do you think she needs?"

"Muriel Elsie likes medicine that tastes good," explained Sister.

"Well, I must put on my thinking-cap," said dear Grandmother Hastings. "I didn't know I was keeping a 'drug store' till this minute, you see."

The children were as quiet as two little mice, so that Grandmother might think better.

"I know!" she cried in a moment. "I think I have the very thing! Come on out in the kitchen with me."

They pattered after her and watched while she lifted down a large pasteboard box from a cupboard. From this box she took several tiny round boxes, such as druggists use for pills.

"I think Muriel Elsie needs two kinds of medicine," said Grandmother gravely. "Now if you want to watch me put it up, there's nothing to hinder you."

Grandmother Hastings could play "pretend" beautifully, as Brother and Sister often said. Now she opened her shining white bread box and took out a loaf of white bread and one of brown. She washed her hands carefully at the sink, tied on a big white apron and brought the sugar and cinnamon from the pantry.

"Oh, Grandma!" squeaked Brother in joyful excitement. "What are you going to do?"

"Why, get some medicine ready for Muriel Elsie," answered his grandmother, making believe to be surprised. "Didn't you want me to?"

"Of course—don't mind him, Grandma," said Sister scornfully. "I'd like to keep a drug store when I grow up."

Grandmother cut a slice of bread from the white loaf and buttered it lightly. Then she sprinkled it with cinnamon and sugar, broke off a little piece and rolled that into several tiny round balls. They looked for all the world like real pills.

Then she cut a slice of brown bread and rolled that into little pills, too. She filled four of the small boxes.

"There!" she said, giving the boxes to Brother. "See that your patient takes a white pill and a brown one every two minutes and she will soon be well."

"Thank you very much, Grandma," said Brother, standing up to go. "Don't you want us to eat the trimmings?"

Grandmother laughed and said yes, they might eat the crusts, and she gave them each a slice of the brown bread spread with nice, sweet butter, too.

Brother and Sister hurried home and on the way over they changed to the Doctor and Muriel Elsie's worried mamma. They had been so interested in watching Grandmother Hastings make the pills that they had almost forgotten that they were playing.

They had left the patient in the porch swing—Sister said it was important to keep her in the fresh air—but when they went to take her up and give her a pill, she wasn't to be found.

"Perhaps Louise did something to her," decided Sister.

But Louise, questioned, declared she had not seen the doll.

"Is it Muriel Elsie you're looking for?" asked Molly, her head tied up in a sweep cap and a broom on her shoulder as she prepared to sweep the upstairs hall. "Why, I found her half an hour ago on the porch floor, her face all cracked into little chips."

"Muriel Elsie all chipped?" repeated Sister in wonder. "Why, she's my very best doll!"

"'Twas that imp of a Brownie did it," related Molly. "I was coming out to sweep the porch off, and he raced on ahead and went to jerking the cushions out of the hammock. First thing I knew

there was a crash, and the doll was smashed on the floor. I saved you the pieces, Sister."

Brownie had a trick, the children knew, of snatching the sofa and swing cushions and flinging them on the floor whenever he thought anyone was ready to sleep. They had always considered this rather a clever trick for a little dog, and Sister could not find it in her heart to scold him even now.

"I suppose he didn't know Muriel Elsie was there," she said sorrowfully. "I had a cushion over her so she couldn't take cold. Where did you put her, Molly?"

Molly brought out the box with the unfortunate Muriel Elsie in it. Only her pretty face was damaged and that was badly chipped. Besides her whole head wobbled on her body.

Sister began to cry.

"Maybe Ralph can mend her," she sobbed. "My poor little Muriel Elsie! And we were playing she was sick, too."

"Yes, I guess Ralph can mend her," said Brother bravely. "He can mend lots of things. And you have all the pieces."

Sister took the box under her arm and went down to the gate to wait for Ralph, who was expected home on an early train.

"Well, I s'pose we might as well eat the pills," suggested Brother. "Muriel Elsie's certainly too sick for pills—she needs—operating on!"

So they ate the pills while they were waiting for Ralph, and they gave Brownie some, too. As Sister said he didn't mean to break the doll and he probably felt the way she did when she found she had knocked over Jimmie's case of butterflies.

CHAPTER XX

PLANS FOR MICKEY

The last pill had disappeared down little red lane, when Ralph was seen to turn the corner.

"Well, Chicks, why so solemn?" he asked cheerfully. "Sister, have you been crying?"

Sister held out the broken doll silently.

"Why, that's too bad!" exclaimed Ralph, sitting down on the step beside his little sister. "What happened to Muriel Elsie?"

"Brownie jerked her out of the hammock and she fell on her head," Brother explained. "Can you mend her, Ralph?"

"I'm afraid not," said Ralph regretfully. "Mending faces is ticklish work; I might manage an arm or leg, but not a FACE. I tell you, Sister—you take Muriel Elsie down to the Exchange and see if Miss Arline can't mend her. Leave her there, ask how much it will cost and when she will be ready, and I'll give you the money."

"I'll go with you, Betty," Brother offered. "Let's go now,"

Molly tied the box up with paper and string and hand in hand Brother and Sister started.

"Certainly I can mend the dollie," announced Miss Arline when they reached her house and had shown her Muriel Elsie and explained the accident. "I think I'll take her into the city with me tomorrow to a doll's hospital. You come for her a week from today and she will be ready for you. I can't tell how much it will cost, you tell your brother, until I find out what the hospital will charge me."

On their way home, Brother and Sister met Mickey Gaffney. They had not seen him since he played school with them, and the sight of him at once suggested something to Brother.

"Say, Nellie Yarrow says you're going to be in the first grade at school this term," he said to Mickey. "I'm going to be in first grade, too. We'll be in the same room."

"Don't know as I'm going to school," declared Mickey perversely. "I didn't go much last year."

"Wouldn't—wouldn't your 'father let you?" suggested Sister timidly.

Mickey flushed a little.

"Aw, it wasn't so much his fault, leastways he said he didn't care if I went," he muttered, digging his bare foot into the gravel on one side of the stone flagging. "After they had him arrested he said I had to go."

"Didn't you want to go?" urged Brother, round-eyed. "I think it's lots of fun to go to school."

"Guess you wouldn't think so if you didn't have some shoes and a good coat," retorted Mickey. "I ain't going to school this year, either, if I can't have things to wear. None of the boys go barefoot."

"But Nellie says Mr. Alexander got some shoes for you to wear," said Brother quickly.

"How would you like to wear somebody else's shoes?" inquired Mickey with scorn. "They belonged to Ted Scott and he was always looking at my feet when I wore 'em. I want some shoes of my OWN!"

"Couldn't your father buy you just one pair?" Sister asked.

"No, he couldn't," Mickey answered desperately. "He doesn't like to work, and we had to sell Ted Scott's shoes this summer for fifty cents. When the old man does work it takes all he makes to buy grub. My mother takes in washing to pay the rent."

Mickey told them this jerkily, as though against his will, and kind-hearted little Brother thought perhaps they had asked too many questions.

"Maybe you could earn money yourself," he said presently. "I'm going to ask Daddy. You just wait, Mickey."

"I wouldn't mind earning SOME money," admitted Mickey cautiously. "But it takes a LOT for new shoes. And they got to be new."

Brother and Sister hurried home, eager to see Daddy Morrison, and ask his advice. They found him reading on the porch and waiting for dinner.

"Oh, Daddy!" Sister rushed for him. "Daddy, how can Mickey Gaffney earn enough money to buy a whole pair of new shoes?"

"A whole pair of shoes?" repeated Daddy, laughing. "Why, Daughter, I suppose a way can be found, if he must have them. Who is this Mickey Gaffney?"

Sister told about Mickey, and Brother helped her, and when they had finished, Daddy Morrison knew all about Mickey and his school troubles.

"Being red-headed and Irish, I don't suppose he will let me GIVE him the money," he mused. "Let's see, what can a chap that age do? He must be seven or eight years old—I've seen him hanging around the station, ready to carry suitcases. I wonder if he couldn't help the boys with the garden?"

"I'll pay him if he can weed," grinned Jimmie, who had been listening. "And Ralph was saying last week that he wasn't going to have time to take his turn at garden work—he wants to go in on an earlier train."

"All right, we'll tell Ralph that Mickey is open for an engagement," said Daddy Morrison. "We'll start him in the garden and then perhaps other odd jobs will turn up."

"Dinner is ready, folks," called Mother Morrison, and they all went into the dining-room.

"I want Mickey to earn a whole lot of money," declared Sister that night as they were getting ready for bed. "Pulling weeds is such slow work. He'll have to pull an awful lot to work an hour."

After Mother had kissed them good-night and put out the light, a big idea came to Sister.

"I know what we'll do!" she asserted, sitting up in bed. "Listen, Roddy, Ellis Carr said his father said Miss Putnam worked too hard. Well, why can't Mickey help her?"

"Maybe he can," murmured Brother sleepily. "Only she wont like him, 'cause he's a boy."

CHAPTER XXI

BROTHER AND SISTER PAY A CALL

Sister's first thought in the morning was Mickey and Miss Putnam. "It's too bad he is a boy," she admitted, referring to Mickey, "because Miss Putnam doesn't like children. But if Mickey was grown up he wouldn't have to have shoes to wear to school, because he wouldn't go to school."

"Sister, your reasoning is all right," Ralph praised her. "Perhaps you will grow up to be a lawyer like your father and brothers."

"Oh, no," said Sister positively and sweetly. "When I grow up I'm going to be a farmer."

After breakfast, she helped Brother clear the table and brush the crumbs, and then she dragged him out to the porch steps to consult with him.

"We have to go see Miss Putnam," she whispered. "About Mickey, you know."

Brother looked frightened.

"She won't let us in," he said in alarm. "She thinks we threw tar on her porch. 'Sides, can't Mickey go see her?"

"No, we want to have it all fixed for him," explained Sister patiently. "Mickey is scared of her, too, and maybe he wouldn't go. But if she says yes, he can work for her, he'll go work 'cause he wants the shoes. Come on, Roddy, I'm not afraid."

"Will you do the talking?" suggested Brother.

Sister promised to "do the talking," and without saying anything to anyone in the house, the small boy and girl set out for the "terrible" Miss Putnam's.

In her heart of hearts, Sister was very much afraid of the cross old lady, and when they turned in at her gate she was almost ready to run home. But she remembered Mickey and how sadly he needed the new shoes, so she lifted the brass knocker on the white door and waited as bravely as she could.

"Land sakes!" gasped Miss Putnam when she came to the door. "What on earth do you want?"

This wasn't a very gracious welcome, and Sister stuttered a little from nervousness as she said they wanted to speak to her.

"Come in then," said Miss Putnam shortly. "Mind you wipe your feet, and don't scratch the rounds of the chairs with your heels."

She led them into a tiny sitting-room and Brother and Sister sat down on two hard, straight chairs while Miss Putnam took the only rocker.

"Well?" she asked expectantly.

"We've come about Mickey Gaffney," said Sister hurriedly. "He hasn't any shoes to wear to school and he wants to earn money to buy 'em. He's going to work for us, some, but school starts in about three weeks and we're afraid he won't have enough money."

"And couldn't he work for you?" chimed in Brother bravely, determined not to let his sister have to do all the talking.

"Why, I do need a man to do odd jobs," said Miss Putnam quite mildly. "Is he very strong?"

You see, she hadn't listened very carefully to Sister, or else she didn't stop to think—no man wants shoes to wear to school.

"Yes'm, he's pretty strong," Sister assured her earnestly. "He's eight years old and big for his age."

"Eight years old!" echoed Miss Putnam. "Why, that's a mere BABY! What can such a child do to earn money?"

"Mickey can run errands and sweep and weed the garden," recited Brother, gaining confidence since Miss Putnam neither shouted at them nor chased them from her house. "He can dry dishes, too—he says he does 'em for his mother."

Miss Putnam thought for a few moments.

"I'm going to need someone to do errands for me this winter when I can't get around," she said slowly. "And I've about broke my back in the garden this summer. But boys are noisy, careless creatures—I don't know as I could stand a boy around me."

"Oh, Mickey is nice," Sister hastened to explain. "He's going to grow up and support his mother. He won't make any more noise than he can help."

Miss Putnam smiled grimly.

"I guess that's true," she said. "Well, tell your Mickey to come round and see me, and if he doesn't charge too much, perhaps we can suit each other."

Brother and Sister trotted home, well-pleased with the success of their errand. It was something to have secured the promise of more work for Mickey.

"There he is now!" exclaimed Brother, spying the flaming red head of the Gaffney boy ahead of them. "Hey, Mickey!"

Mickey was on his way to the grocery store for soap, he informed them.

"Wait a minute," said Brother. "We want to tell you—Daddy says you can help Jimmie and Ralph in our garden and they will pay you, by the hour, Ralph says. And Miss Putnam says you can run errands for her."

"Miss Putnam?" repeated Mickey, surprised. "Miss Putnam wouldn't have a boy in her yard."

"Yes, she will," declared Sister. "She said so. And you can run errands after school this winter when she can't get around—she said so, didn't she, Roddy?"

Brother nodded.

"It would be kind of nice to have a job this winter, wouldn't it?" said Mickey thoughtfully. "My mother would like that. Well, if you're sure Miss Putnam won't come out with a broom when she sees me, I'll go."

"No, she won't," Sister assured him. "I don't believe she's so cross when you know her."

"'Cept about tar," said Brother sorrowfully.

Mickey looked at them, mystified.

"What about tar?" he asked. "Has Miss Putnam any?"

CHAPTER XXII

MICKEY OWNS UP

Brother told Mickey the tar incident in a few words.

"And you can't make her believe Betty and I didn't put it on her porch," he concluded. "She's just 'termined we did it."

"And she sent the policeman to your house and all," mused Mickey. "Gee!"

His face was rather red and he looked at Brother and Sister queerly. He opened his mouth as though to say something, then apparently changed his mind.

"Well, we have to go home," declared Brother. "You'll go see Miss Putnam, won't you, Mickey?"

"I suppose so," muttered Mickey. "So long!"

"Maybe he doesn't like it," said Sister as they went on toward their house.

"Oh, yes he does," replied Brother confidently. "He'll go, you see if he doesn't."

Mickey Gaffney did go see Miss Putnam, and something about him made the old lady like him right away. She engaged him to do errands for her an hour in the morning, and again in the afternoon, and she paid him fifteen cents an hour. If he weeded in the garden that was to be extra.

"Will you have enough for your shoes?" asked Sister anxiously one morning, when Mickey came to do some weeding in the garden for Jimmie.

"My, yes, and I guess I can buy my little sister a pair," said Mickey proudly.

"Have you a little sister?" demanded Brother and Sister together. "How old is she?"

"Five," answered Mickey, getting down on his hands and knees and going at the weeds in a business-like way. "She'll be five next month."

"Isn't that nice!" commented Sister. "I'm five years old, too."

Mickey avoided her eyes and was apparently too busy to talk much to them, so by and by Brother and Sister ran off and left him to his weeding.

If they had stayed, they might have seen Mickey throw down his weeding-fork suddenly and march out of the garden.

"Don't believe that boy is going to stick to his work," said Molly to Mother Morrison. "He's gone already."

But Mickey was hurrying along toward Miss Putnam's house and did not care very much what anyone thought of him. He didn't think kindly of himself at that moment.

"Why, Mickey!" Miss Putnam looked up at him in amazement as he came around to the back porch where she was sweeping a rug. "What's the matter, child, don't you feel well?"

"I feel all right," he said briefly. "Say, Miss Putnam, you know that tar that was on your porch? I threw it!"

"You—you what?" gasped Miss Putnam. "You threw that hot tar all over my clean porch and walk? Why, Mickey!"

"Yes'm," muttered Mickey miserably.

"But why?" insisted Miss Putnam. "And Mrs. Graham told me that the Morrison boy and girl did it."

"Guess she thought she saw 'em—it was most dark," said Mickey. "But it wasn't Roddy and Betty. I did it, and Nina, my little sister, helped me."

"But why?" persisted Miss Putnam. "I never should have thought it of you, Mickey, never."

Strange as it may seem, Miss Putnam really liked Mickey. He was so willing and so cheerful and so quick that the old lady who had had to do all the work of her small home so long that she had forgotten how it felt to have younger hands helping her, began to look forward to Mickey's coming every day.

And Mickey liked Miss Putnam. He found she was very fair about time and reasonable about the amount of work she expected him to accomplish. The fact that he was barefooted did not seem to bother her and she treated him exactly as though his clothes were whole instead of torn and poorly patched.

Now when she asked him why he had thrown the tar, it was hard for him to tell the truth. But he did. When Mickey once made up his mind to do a thing, he always went through with it.

"It was 'count of the barbwire," Mickey explained in a low voice. "I didn't know you put it up, and I climbed the fence one night, to scare you through the window, and I thought you'd run out and chase me. And I tore my coat on the wire and scratched my face. So after that I was always looking for a chance to get even."

"When I saw the tar, I came back after supper and made Nina carry it for me while I slung it—we had a tin bucket. I'm awful sorry, Miss Putnam; honest I am!"

"But—did you let me send a policeman to the Morrison's house?" asked Miss Putnam uncertainly.

"I never knew about that till just before I came here to work," said Mickey earnestly. "And ever since I've felt mean as dirt, not telling. Nina is just as old as Betty. It wasn't her fault—Nina's, I mean; she does whatever I tell her to."

"Well, I'll go call on Mrs. Morrison this afternoon," said Miss Putnam briskly. "And then I'll take down that wire. I don't need it now anyway, for the children don't bother me since you're here. I guess they're afraid you'd catch them if you should chase them," she smiled grimly.

"And I can go right on working?" suggested Mickey anxiously.

"Of course, child. Why not?" said Miss Putnam.

That settled Mickey's last worry. With a hurried "thank you," he dashed away, out through the yard and up the street. He wanted to find Brother and Sister and tell them what he had done.

"My goodness, I think you're ever so brave," said Sister when she had heard his story. "I'd be scared to death to tell Miss Putnam like that."

"Pooh, she's all right," answered Mickey. "I like her. And now I have a lot of time to make up—most half an hour."

"School begins two weeks from today," announced Brother, watching Mickey tackle an onion row. "You're sure you're going, Mickey?"

"Of course," said Mickey proudly. "I'll stop for you the first morning just to prove it."

"And we'll go every day and never be late once, will we?" chimed in Sister.

But whether they were able to keep this good resolution or not remains to be seen. If you are interested to know you will have to read the next book about them, called "BROTHER AND SISTER'S SCHOOL DAYS."

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BROTHER AND SISTER ***

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