

Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on an Auto Tour eBook

Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on an Auto Tour by Laura Lee Hope

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THE BOY NEXT DOOR

"Oh, mother!" cried Bunny Brown, running up the front steps as he reached home from school. "Oh, something's happened next door!"

"What do you mean, Bunny? A fire?"

"No, it isn't a fire," said Sue, who was as much out of breath as was her brother. "It's sumfin different from that!"

"But, children, what do you mean? Is some one hurt?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"It sounds so," answered Bunny, putting his books on the table. "I heard Mrs. Ward crying."

"Oh, the poor woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "She must be in trouble. They have only just moved here. I'd better go over and see if I can help her"; and Mrs. Brown laid down her sewing.

"I guess it must be about their boy Fred," suggested Bunny.

"What happened to him?" asked Mrs. Brown. "Was he hurt at school? He goes to school, doesn't he?"

"Yes, but he wasn't there to-day," went on Bunny. "And it's Fred who's in trouble I guess, for I heard his mother speak his name, and then Mr. Ward said something else."

"Oh, dear, I hope nothing has happened," said Mrs. Brown, looking up at the clock to see if it were not time for her husband to come home from his boat and fishing pier. "We must do what we can to help, Bunny. Now tell me all about it. Not that I want to interfere with my neighbors' affairs, but I always like to help."

"And I think Mrs. Ward needs some help," said Sue, "'cause she was crying real hard."

"Then I'll go right over and see what is the matter," said kind Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, and may we go too?" asked Bunny.

"Please let us," begged Sue.

Their mother thought for a minute. Sometimes, she knew, it was not good for children to go where older persons were crying, and had trouble. But Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue were two wise little children, wiser than many of their age, and their mother knew she could depend on them. So, after a few seconds, she said:

“Yes, you may come with me. We shall see what the matter is with Mrs. Ward.”

“And we’ll help her too, if we can,” added. Bunny, bravely.

Mrs. Brown, followed by Bunny and Sue, started for the home of Mrs. Ward. A wide lawn was between the two houses, and on this lawn Bunny and Sue, with their dog Splash, had much fun.

The Wards were a family who had lately moved to the street where the Browns had lived for years. As yet Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Ward had gotten only as far as a “nodding acquaintance.” That is, Mrs. Brown, coming out into her yard, would see Mrs. Ward, and would say:

“Good morning. It’s a fine day; isn’t it?”

“Yes, indeed it is,” Mrs. Ward would answer.

Sometimes it would be Mrs. Ward who would first speak about the fine weather and Mrs. Brown would answer. Both women would soon become better acquainted.

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Mr. Brown had seen Mr. Ward several mornings on his way to work, and, knowing him to be the man next door, had nodded, and said: "Good morning!" And Mr. Ward had said the same thing. They, too, would soon be better acquainted.

"I know the Wards are nice people," said Sue, as she trotted along beside her mother.

"What makes you think so?" asked Mrs. Brown, as she walked slowly across her lawn toward the house next door.

"Cause they have a nice dog named Dix, and he and Splash are good friends. First they sort of growled at each other, and then they smelled noses and now they always wag their tails when they meet."

"Well, that's a good sign," laughed Sue's mother.

"But I wonder what can be the matter with the boy next door," said Sue to her brother. "Are you sure you heard Mr. and Mrs. Ward talking about Fred?"

"Yes, I'm sure," answered Bunny.

"Well, I didn't hear that part," said Sue. "But we'll soon find out what the matter is."

As the Browns walked across the lawn, a dog came running out of the house where lived "the boy next door," as Bunny and Sue called Fred Ward, even though they knew his name. They had spoken several times to him.

"Is that dog savage?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"No, Momsie," replied Sue. "He's just as nice as he can be. He and Splash are good friends. Here Dix!" she called.

With a joyful bark the dog bounded toward Sue. He evidently knew the children, and soon made friends with Mrs. Brown.

"He's a strong dog," she said to the children.

"And he's good, too!" exclaimed Bunny. "I was talking to Fred one day and he told me that his dog Dix saved him from drowning when they lived in another city, near a river."

"That was fine!" cried Mrs. Brown. "I think I shall like Dix."

By this time they were under the dining-room windows of the Ward house, and Mrs. Brown and the children heard the sound of a woman sobbing, and a man trying to comfort her.

"Now don't worry, Martha," said the man. "Everything will come out right, I'm sure, and we'll find Fred."

"Oh, I hope so!" moaned the woman. And she kept on crying.

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Brown, calling in through the open window. "But I fear you have trouble, and I have come over to see if I may not help you."

Mr. Ward looked out of the window.

"It's Mrs. Brown," he said, evidently speaking to his wife in the room behind him.

"I have been intending to come over to see you," went on Mrs. Brown. "But you know how it is I suppose, Mrs. Ward," for now the other lady had come to the window. "We keep putting such things off. And really I have been so busy since we came back from our camp in the big woods that I haven't had time to set my house to rights."

"I know how it is, Mrs. Brown," replied Mrs. Ward, wiping the tears from her eyes, "and I am glad to see you now. Won't you come in?"

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"I really don't know whether I ought to or not. My children, on coming home from school, said they heard sounds of distress in here, and knowing you were strangers I thought perhaps you might not know where to apply for help in case you needed it. My husband is one of the town officials, and if we can do anything——"

"It is very kind of you," said Mrs. Ward. "Thank you so much for coming over. We are in trouble, and perhaps you can give us some advice. Please come in."

She went to the front door and let in Bunny, Sue and their mother, the two children wondering what could have happened to the boy next door, for they did not see him, and it seemed the trouble was about him.

"It won't take long to tell you what has happened," said Mrs. Ward, placing chairs for Mrs. Brown and the two children. "Our boy Fred has run away from home!"

"Run away from home!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown.

"Yes, that's what he's done," said Mr. Ward. "I never thought he'd do such a thing as that, even though he is quick tempered. Yes, Fred has run away," and he turned over and over in his hand a slip of paper he had been reading.

"Perhaps he only went off in a sort of joke," said Mrs. Brown sympathetically. "I know once Bunny——"

"Yep. I ran away, I did!" exclaimed Bunny. "I got away down to the end of the street. I saw a man and a hand organ and he had a monkey. I mean the man did. And I wanted to be a hand-organ man so I ran away and was going off with him, only Bunker Blue chased after me, so I didn't run far, though I might have."

"Bunker Blue is a boy who works on Mr. Brown's fishing pier," explained Mrs. Brown. "Yes, Bunny did run away once, but he was glad to run back again."

"And I was lost!" cried Sue. "I was out walking with my daddy, and I went down a wrong street, and I couldn't see him and I didn't know what to do so I—I cried."

"Yes, Sue was lost a whole morning before a policeman found her and telephoned to us," put in Mrs. Brown. "She was glad to get back. Undoubtedly your boy will be the same."

"No," said Mr. Ward slowly, "I don't believe Fred will come home soon. He has gone off very angry."

"Are you sure he didn't go to the home of some neighbor or of a relative?" asked Mrs. Brown. "Children often do that, never thinking how worried their fathers and mothers are."

“No, Fred is too old to do that,” said Mrs. Ward, wiping the tears out of her eyes. “He has gone, intending to stay a long while.”

“What makes you think so?” asked Mrs. Brown.

“Because of this note he left,” answered the father of the boy next door. “You see, Mrs. Brown, I had to correct Fred for doing something wrong. He spent some money to buy a banjo that he had promised—I had told him I would get him a fine banjo next year, but

“Well, he disobeyed me, and I felt I had to punish him. So I sent him up to his room to stay all day. He went to his room, and that is the last we have seen of him. He left this note, saying he was never coming back.”

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“Read Mrs. Brown the note,” suggested Mrs. Ward. “Maybe she can think of some plan to get Fred back.”

Mr. Ward was about to read the note when Mr. Brown’s voice was heard under the dining-room windows saying:

“Hello, Mother, and Bunny and Sue! Mary told me you had come over here, so I thought I’d come to pay a visit too. I’ve news for you.”

“Oh, it’s daddy!” cried Sue, and she ran to let her father in through the front door.

“I wonder what news it is,” said Bunny to himself. “I wonder if he has found Fred.”

CHAPTER II

AN OFFER OF HELP

As Mr. Brown walked into the home of the Ward family he saw at once, by a look at his wife, and by the expressions on the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Ward, that something had happened.

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” Mr. Brown said. “Perhaps I shouldn’t have come in. I’ll call another time. But——”

“What about the good news you have, Daddy?” asked Bunny.

“I didn’t say it was good news, Son.”

“Yes, it is. I can tell by your eyes!” exclaimed Sue.

“Whatever it is, it will keep a little while,” said Mrs. Brown, with a look at her husband, which he understood. “Our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Ward,” she continued, “are in great distress. Their only son, Fred, has run away from home.”

“Oh, that’s too bad!” exclaimed Mr. Brown. “I shouldn’t have come in. I’ll——”

“No, stay, we’ll want your advice,” said Mrs. Brown. “Mr. Ward was just going to read a letter his son left. I want you to listen to it and tell us what is best to do. You know you are on the police board.”

“Of course I’ll do all I can,” said Mr. Brown. “First let me hear the letter. You can sometimes tell a good deal of what’s in a person’s mind by the way he writes.”

And while Mr. Brown is listening to the letter left by the runaway boy, I'll tell my new readers something more about Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue, and the things that happened to them in the books before this.

The first volume is named "Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue," and it tells of what happened to the two children in their home town of Bellemere, on Sandport Bay, near the ocean. There the little boy and girl had fine times, and they took a trolley ride to a far city, getting lost.

The second book told of "Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on Grandpa's Farm," and you can imagine the fun they had there, getting lost in the woods and going to picnics. After that the two children played Circus in the book of that name, and they had real animals in their show, though you could not exactly call them wild.

"Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue at Aunt Lu's City Home," is the name of the fourth book, and in the big city Bunny and Sue had stranger adventures than ever.

After that Mr. Brown took the whole family to "Camp Rest-a-While." It was a lovely place in the woods and they lived in tents. Uncle Tad went with them, and ever so many things happened to the children there. Their dog Splash had good times too.

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Camp Rest-a-While was near the edge of the big woods, and in the book called “Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue in the Big Woods,” which is just before this one, you may read of the adventures with Bunny’s train of electric cars, and of the fun Sue had with her electrical Teddy bear, which could flash its eyes when a button was pressed in his back—or rather, *her* back, for Sue had named her Teddy bear Sallie Malinda, insisting that it was a girl bear.

And now the Brown family was home again from the big woods, ready for other happenings. And that they were going to have adventures might be guessed from what Mr. Brown started to say about some news. But just now he was reading the letter Fred Ward had written to his parents.

“Hum! That is a strange note for a boy to leave,” said Mr. Brown slowly. “He evidently doesn’t intend to come home very soon.”

“Oh dear!” exclaimed Mrs. Ward, and commenced to weep once more.

“I tell her he may come home soon, for he has no money—or at least very little to live on,” said the missing boy’s father. “You see Fred has a high spirit, and he did not like it when I had to punish him. But I did it for his good. He must learn the value of money, and he must not spend when I tell him not to.”

“No, that is not right,” said Mr. Brown thoughtfully. He handed the note to his wife. She read this:

“Father and Mother: I am not coming back for a long while. I do not think you treated me right. I am more than fifteen years old and I have a right to have a banjo if I want it. I want to be a player and play in the theater. That is what I am going to do. I am not going to be treated like a baby by my father. I am too old.”

“I did not mean to treat him like a baby,” said Mr. Ward. “But our children must be made to obey in things that are right.”

“That is true,” agreed Mrs. Brown.

“We mind sometimes,” said Bunny. “Don’t we, Momsie?”

“Yes, once in a while. But please run away and play now, until we call you. There comes Splash over to have a game with Dix. You children can go out with the dogs.”

Bunny and Sue were eager enough to do this. They thought they had heard enough about the missing boy. They were to hear more in a short time.

“And so Fred has run away,” said Mr. Ward, speaking to Mr. and Mrs. Brown. “How can I get him back? It is not good that he should be away. I will talk about the banjo to him,

and if I find he really thinks it is the best instrument for him to play I may let him have it. But where can I find him?"

"Perhaps I can help," said Mr. Brown. "I am a member of the town police committee. That is, I and other men look after the policemen. We can tell them to be on the lookout for Fred."

"Oh, that is kind of you!" cried Mrs. Ward.

"And I can also send word to the police of other cities and towns," went on Mr. Brown. "We work together on cases like this."

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"I shall be greatly obliged to you," said Mr. Ward. "I want Fred to come back."

"When did you find out he was gone?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Just a little while ago," answered Mr. Ward. "I sent him up to his room this morning. He did not come down to dinner, for I said he should not eat until he said he was sorry for what he did. Perhaps I was wrong, but I meant to do right."

"You did it for the best," said his wife. "When I went up to Fred's room this afternoon, he was gone, and there was this note. It was then I cried," she went on, turning to the parents of Bunny and Sue.

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Brown. "But I think it will all come right. My husband will help find your boy."

"I'll get the police to help, too," said Mr. Brown. "They will search for him."

"And we'll help!" exclaimed Bunny and Sue, coming in just then from having a romp on the lawn with the two dogs. "We'll try to find Fred for you."

"Bless their hearts!" cried Mrs. Brown, as the children ran out again. "They get into all sorts of mischief, but they manage to get out somehow. Bunny is ready for anything, and Sue is generally ready for whatever follows."

"But they are learning a good deal," said Mr. Brown. "Their life in the woods and on the farm was good for them—as good as the time they spend in school."

"Yes," said Mr. Ward. "Sometimes I think I may have kept Fred too much at his books. I wish I had him back."

"Oh, we'll find him," said Mr. Brown.

"I hope so," sighed Mrs. Ward. "It is very kind of you to offer to help us."

"Why shouldn't we?" asked Mrs. Brown. "That is what neighbors are for—to help one another. We'll go, now. But Mr. Brown will come back and get you to tell him what Fred looks like, and how he was dressed, so the police will know him if they see him. They will send you word where he is if they find him."

"I will give you his photograph," said Mr. Ward.

As Mr. and Mrs. Brown walked across the lawn, they saw Bunny and Sue playing with the two dogs. Bunny was on Splash's back as though the dog were a horse, and Sue was doing the same thing with Dix.

“Gid-dap! Gid-dap!” cried the two little ones, holding to the dogs’ long ears so they would not fall off—I mean so the children would not fall off, not the dogs’ ears.

“Aren’t they having a good time?” asked Mrs. Brown smiling.

“They certainly are,” agreed her husband.

“I’m glad it is neither of our children who is away.”

“I can’t bear even to think of that!” said Mrs. Brown, with a shudder.

“Look out! They’ll run us down!” she went on, for the children, on their dog-horses, were rushing right at them.

“Clear the track! Clear the track!” cried Bunny, wildly.

“Yes! All aboard for the north pole!” yelled Sue.

“Bow-wow!” barked the two dogs, as happy as the children.

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"Oh, Daddy! Do you know how to find Fred?" asked the little girl as she fell off her dog into the soft grass.

"Well, we are going to try," answered her father.

"And we'll help," cried Bunny. Then, as he happened to think of something, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Daddy! What about the good news you were going to tell us?"

"We want to hear it now," added Sue.

"You did say something about a surprise," added Mrs. Brown. "So much has happened to-day that I had forgotten."

"Maybe you won't think it such news after all," observed Mr. Brown. "But it occurs to me that there is going to be some warm weather yet, as the Fall is not yet over. So I was thinking we could take the big automobile—the one we used when we went to Grandpa's farm—and have a tour in it. I have to go to a distant city on business, but there is no hurry in getting there. We might all go in the big car. Shall we go?"

"Shall we go? Of course!" cried Bunny, dancing about.

"That's what I say!" added Sue, also capering wildly. "Oh, Bunny!" she cried, "haven't we got just the bestest daddy in the whole world?"

"We have! We have!"

"Then let's both kiss him at once!" proposed Sue, and they made a rush for Mr. Brown, who pretended to be much afraid.

CHAPTER III

READY FOR THE TRIP

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Go and love your mother for a change!" laughed Mr. Brown as he squirmed away from Bunny and Sue, who had hugged him and kissed him half a dozen times. "You've mussed my hair all up! Isn't my hair sticking up seven ways, Mother?" he asked his wife.

"Indeed it is. If you children muss mine that way I shall have to comb it again before supper, and I'll hardly have time if father is to explain about the auto tour. This is as much news to me, Bunny and Sue, as it is to you."

“Oh, Mother made a rhyme! Now we’ll have a good time!” cried Bunny. “Come on, Sue, we’ll kiss her easy-like, and then we’ll hear about the trip. When are you going, Daddy?”

“And where?” asked Sue.

“One is about as important as the other,” laughed Mr. Brown. “But I think you will have to wait a while. I want to telephone to the chief of police, and have him start the search for Fred Ward. We have to work quickly in the cases of runaway boys, or they get so far away that it makes them harder to find.”

“What makes boys run away?” asked Bunny.

“Well, it’s hard to tell,” said Mr. Brown. “Sometimes it’s because they feel ashamed at being punished, just as Fred was, and as you might be, Bunny, if I scolded you for being bad. Not that you are often naughty, but you might be, some time.”

“But I wouldn’t run away,” Bunny said, shaking his head very earnestly. “I like it here too much. I read a story once, about a boy who ran away, and he had to sleep in a haymow and eat raw eggs for breakfast.”

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"Oh! I'd never do *that*!" cried Sue. "I wouldn't mind playing with the little chickens that came out of the eggs, but I wouldn't run away," she said earnestly. "I wouldn't want to sleep in a haystack lessen Bunny was with me."

"Well, when you two make up your minds to run away," said Mrs. Brown with a laugh, "tell us, and we'll come for you when night falls and bring you home. Then you can sleep in your own beds and run away the next day."

"That will be great!" cried Bunny. "We'll do it that way, Sue."

"That's what we will!" said she.

They were at the Browns' house now, and Dix, the dog that belonged to the runaway boy, turned to go back home. Splash barked at him as much as to say:

"Oh, come on, old fellow, stay and have a good time. Maybe I can find a choice bone or two."

But Dix wagged his tail and barked, and if one had understood dog language, of which I suppose there must be one, he would, perhaps, have heard Dix say:

"No, old chap. I'm sorry I can't come to play with you now. Some other time, perhaps. There's trouble at home you know, and I'd better stay around there."

Then Splash and Dix looked at each other for a little while, saying never a word, as one might call it, only looking at each other. They seemed to understand, however, for, with a final wagging of their tails, away they ran, Dix back to the Ward home where the mother and the father were grieving for their lost boy, and Splash on to the happy home of the Browns.

"Now, Daddy, you can tell us about that auto trip we are going to take, while mother is seeing to the supper," called Bunny as he pulled his father toward a big armchair, while Sue clung to her father on the other side.

"Not until after the meal," insisted Mr. Brown. "I want to tell it to mother and you all at the same time. That will save me from talking so much. Besides, I haven't yet told the police about missing Fred Ward."

Mr. Brown soon called the chief on the telephone wire. Being the president of the police board, Mr. Brown often had to give orders.

In this case he told the chief about Fred running away, how long the boy had been gone, and about the note saying he was going to join a theater company.

“We’d better get some circulars printed, with the boy’s picture on them,” said Mr. Brown to the chief. “These we can send to other cities. And we’ll notify the police by telephone. I’ll be down to see you this evening.”

“All right,” answered the chief. “I’ll get right after this boy.”

“And tell whoever catches him to be good and kind to him,” said Mr. Brown. “Fred is not a bad boy. He feels that he has not been treated well, and he’ll do his best to hide away. But a boy with a banjo, who is crazy to play in a show, ought not be very hard to find.”

“No, I think we’ll soon pick him up,” the chief said.

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"Well, pick him up as soon as you can," said Mr. Brown.

"Pick him *up*!" repeated Bunny, who had been listening to his father's side of the conversation. "Did Fred fall down?"

"No. 'Pick him up' is a police expression," explained Mr. Brown. "It means find him, or learn where he is."

"Oh, I see," murmured Bunny. "Well, I hope they'll soon find Fred."

The talk at supper time drifted from the running away of the boy next door, and what might happen to him, to the trip the Browns were to take in the big car.

"Well, now are you ready to tell us?" asked Bunny, as he saw his father finish his cup of tea.

"Yes, I'll tell you a little now, and more when the time comes, as I have soon to go down to the police station with Fred's picture. But I'll tell you enough so you can sleep easy," said Mr. Brown with a laugh. Then he sat thinking for a while as to the best way to tell his news.

"In the first place——" began Mr. Brown, only to have Bunny interrupt him with:

"Oh, it starts off just like a story!"

"No," cried Sue. "A story begins: 'Once upon a time.'"

"Well, never mind about that now," said Mr. Brown with a laugh. "Let me get on with what I have to tell you. The first part is that I have to go to a city called Portland, about three hundred miles down the coast. I have to go there on business, but there is no particular hurry. That is, I can take my time on the road. Just what the business is about needn't worry your heads, except that I'm going to look at a big motor boat which I may buy."

"And may I have a ride in it?" cried Bunny.

"I want to ride myself," cried Sue, "and I want to learn how to steer."

"Well, we'll talk that over later," said her father. "Just now I am going to tell you about our auto tour. We are going, as I said, to the city of Portland. It is three hundred miles there, but the roundabout roads we will take may make it longer."

"Can we stop over a day or so here and there?" asked Mrs. Brown.

“Yes, several days, if we like,” said her husband. “We are going in the big enclosed auto, in which we went to grandpa’s farm.”

“That will be lovely!” cried Sue.

“Just dandy!” exclaimed Bunny Brown. “And I’m going to sit on the seat and steer, just as I did when Bunker Blue took us to grandpa’s.”

“I don’t know that Bunker is going this time,” said Mr. Brown, speaking of the boy who worked for him and ran some of the motor boats when parties of men and women wanted to go out in the bay fishing.

“Oh! Bunker not going?” cried Bunny, somewhat disappointed.

“But we’ll take your dog Splash and Uncle Tad,” said Mr. Brown.

“That will be all right,” agreed Bunny. “Go on, Daddy. Tell us some more.”

“Well, I don’t know that there is any more to tell. We are going in the big automobile, have a nice trip, and come back when we get ready. It will be Indian Summer most of the time, the nicest part of the year, I think, so we ought to have good weather. Now the rest is in your hands and your mother’s—getting ready for the trip.”

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Those who have read the book telling about the time spent on grandpa's farm will remember the big automobile in which the Browns traveled to the farm.

It had been a furniture moving van, and you know how big and strong they are. Inside they are just like a big room in a house, only they move about by a motor in the front, just as does a small automobile.

But this moving van was very different from the kind usually seen. The inside had been made over into several rooms. There were little bunks, or beds in which to sleep, a combined kitchen and dining room, and a little sitting room where, in the evenings after the day's travel, the children could sit and read, for the traveling automobile was lighted by electric lights, from a storage battery carried in it.

On bright, sunshiny days the little table was moved out of the van to the ground beside it and there the meals were served. Sometimes cooking was done out-of-doors, also, on a gasoline stove. A tent was carried, and if any company came they could sleep in that if there was not room in the auto-van.

When the Browns wanted to travel through the rain they could do so without getting wet, for there was a stout roof on the automobile.

Windows had been cut in the sides of the van so the children could sit beside them in stormy weather and look out, just as if they were in a railroad car. And in the big car was a place for some of the children's toys.

There was room for plenty of food to be carried, and even a small ice-box that could be filled with ice whenever they stopped in a city.

"Well," said Mr. Brown, after he had told Bunny, Sue and their mother about his plan, "do you think you'll like it?"

"I'll just love it!" cried Sue.

"So will I," said Bunny. "Let's hug and kiss daddy and momsie!"

"No, I'll have to beg off!" cried Mr. Brown. "Just one kiss each, and don't muss my hair for I've got to go to the police station to take Fred's picture. I'm sure his father would feel bad about doing a thing like that so I'll do it for him. I'll be back soon."

"And we'll talk about the trip while you're gone," said Mrs. Brown.

Bunny and Sue were in bed when their father returned. The next morning their mother told them, after Mr. Brown had gone to work, that he had asked the police to do all they could to find Fred Ward.

“And now we must get ready for our trip,” went on Mrs. Brown. “I must get both of you some new clothes, for you wore out many suits while we were at Camp Rest-a-While and in the Big Woods.”

“But don’t get too many. It will take too long to get ’em,” remarked Bunny. “We want to get started on our auto tour.”

Not long after this Mrs. Brown announced that she was ready for the trip—that she had bought the new clothes, and had arranged for the food they were to take with them.

“Then I’ll bring the big auto around here to the house to-morrow morning and let you look at it,” said Mr. Brown. “I have made a few changes in it. I hope you will like it.”

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"Oh, we'll be sure to," said Mrs. Brown.

That night, when Bunny and Sue were ready for bed, Bunny looked out of the window toward the Ward house. There was a bright moon.

"I see Dix and Splash playing together on the lawn," he said.

"And I see something else," added Sue.

"What?" asked Bunny.

"I see Fred Ward coming home. There he is, going up the back steps now."

Sue pointed, and Bunny saw a tall lad, who did look very much like the runaway boy, at the back door of the Ward home.

"Oh, let's tell daddy and momsie!" cried Bunny, as he and his sister, in their bare feet, pattered their way downstairs.

CHAPTER IV

BUNNY AT THE WHEEL

Bunny and Sue raced downstairs and burst into the sitting room where their mother and father were sitting.

"Oh, Daddy!" cried Bunny.

"Oh, Momsie!" exclaimed Sue.

They were both out of breath.

"Well, what's the matter now?" asked Mrs. Brown. "Why aren't you in bed?"

"We saw something—anyhow Sue did," explained Bunny.

"But first Bunny saw Splash and Dix playing on the lawn in the moonlight," said Sue, breathing fast.

"And then Sue saw Fred coming home—in by the back way," added Bunny, his eyes big with wonder.

"What's that?" cried Mr. Brown, almost as excited as the two children.

"You say you saw Fred Ward?" asked Mother Brown.

"Well, it *looked* like him," replied Bunny, not quite so sure now that questions were being asked of him and his sister.

"And he was going very carefully and quietly around the back way," added Sue. "Who could it be but Fred? He's getting tired of sleeping in haystacks and eating raw eggs, and he's come home, I guess."

"Look here, Sue and Bunny," said Mr. Brown, a bit firmly but still kindly. "Did you both see this? Or did you make it up or dream it?"

"We didn't dream," said Sue, "'cause we hadn't gone to sleep yet."

"And we didn't make it up, for we weren't playing make-believe," added Bunny.

"Then you must have seen something," said their father; for when Bunny and his sister spoke in this serious way their parents could tell they were in earnest.

"What could it be?" asked Mrs. Brown, with a wondering look at her husband.

"I'll run over and see," he replied. "You children hop back into bed. You'll catch cold."

"Oh, Daddy! It's Summer yet, and we're even going to sleep out in the tent when we're on the auto tour," said Bunny. "Let us wait up and see if Fred really has come home. I hope he has!"

"I hope so, too," said Mother Brown. "Let them lie awake in bed, Daddy, until you come back from the Ward home."

"All right, I will," Mr. Brown agreed, and as he started across the moonlighted lawn Bunny and Sue, with many whisperings, noddings and giggles went back upstairs to their room.

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But they did not go to bed. This was one of the times when they did not do as they were told. But it was only once in a while they did anything like that. Bunny and Sue were, as a rule, very good.

Well, instead of going to bed they stood by the window where they could watch the lawn on which Splash and Dix were still playing.

"We mustn't catch cold," said Sue. "We'd better wrap a blanket around us, Bunny, if we stand by the window, though it isn't cold at all."

"Yep," grunted Bunny, who was so interested in watching his father cross the grass plot that he did not feel like talking much.

Sue brought a light blanket from her bed and one from Bunny's, and in these the children wrapped themselves, and stood by the window.

"There he is!" cried Bunny, as he saw the tall figure of his father, accompanied by a bigger shadow in the moonlight, appear on the lawn.

"Hush!" cautioned Sue. "Don't talk so loud or mother will come up and make us go to bed."

Bunny "hushed," and then the two children watched. They saw their father go up the side steps of the Ward house and very soon come out again.

"It didn't take him long to find out," said Bunny in a low voice.

"I hope Fred has come back," whispered Sue.

But it was not, as they learned a little later when their mother came upstairs to tell them. The children had quickly scampered back to their beds when they heard their mother coming up, and she found two anxious faces peering at her over the blankets.

"Was it Fred?" they asked excitedly.

"No, I am sorry to say it was not," answered Mrs. Brown. "It was one of the boys Fred used to play with, and he went around the back way because he did not want any one to see him going in the front door."

"Does he know where Fred is?" asked Bunny.

"No. But he went to tell Mr. Ward about him. He had seen some of the police circulars, or printed papers which were scattered about, showing Fred's picture and telling how he looked and how much his father wanted him to come home again."

“And is he coming?” asked Sue.

“We don’t know, dear. Mr. Ward told us this boy, whose name is George Simpson, knew that Fred was going to run away, for Fred had told him.”

“Why didn’t George come and tell Fred’s father so he could stop him?” asked Bunny.

“Because Fred made George promise not to tell. But after George had seen the police circulars he made up his mind he must say something, so he came to-night. He said Fred had told him he was going to run away to Portland and try to get work in a theater playing a banjo.”

“Portland!” cried Bunny. “Why that’s where we’re going!”

“And maybe we’ll see Fred!” added Sue.

“It may be,” said their mother. “But now you two must go to sleep. The big auto will be here in the morning, and you will wish to see the new things daddy has put in.”

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"May I ask just one more question?" begged Bunny.

"Yes, and only one."

"How did Fred come to go to Portland? Did he know we were going there?"

"No, dear. But he knew a man in a theater there who had promised to give him a trial at banjo playing if ever he wanted it. So, when Fred ran away, he decided to go there. At least so he told George."

"Oh, Mother, when we get to Portland may we——" began Sue, but Mrs. Brown laughed and cried:

"No more questions until morning!"

Bunny and Sue talked in whispers for a little while, and then fell asleep. They were awakened by the honking of an automobile horn, and Bunny, hopping out of bed and running to the window, cried to his sister:

"Oh, Sue, it's the big car we're going touring in, and Bunker Blue has brought it up the hill. Come on down to see it."

"Oh what fun!" cried Sue.

She and Bunny dressed quickly, and without waiting for breakfast they ran out to look at the automobile.

Bunker Blue, the boy who worked at the dock for Mr. Brown and who had gone on the first trip in the Brown's big car, smiled at Bunny and Sue.

"Well, you've got a fine car now!" he cried.

"Is it different?" asked Sue.

"A lot different. Come inside."

"Breakfast, children!" called their mother.

"Oh, Mother, just a second—until we see how the auto is fixed different?" begged Bunny.

Mrs. Brown nodded, and Bunker Blue helped the little boy and his sister inside.

There were many things changed. The electric lights were bigger and brighter, so they could see to read or play games better at night; a new cookstove had been put in; an extra bunk had been made, so five persons could sleep in the auto-van; a new tent had

been bought; and in one corner of the tiny kitchen was a little sink, with running water which came from a tank on the roof. This tank was filled by a hose and pump worked by the motor. Whenever the water ran low the automobile could be stopped near a brook or lake, one end of the hose dipped in the water and the other stuck in the tank. Then the pump could fill the tank, and the tank, in turn, could let the water down into the sink whenever needed.

“Your mother’ll like that,” said Bunker Blue.

“Indeed she will!” cried Sue.

“Is there anything else new?” asked Bunny.

“Indeed there is!” cried Bunker Blue. “The auto-van’s got a self-starter on. That’s the best of all, I think. You don’t have to get out to crank up now. It’s great. See, I’ll show you.”

While the children stood on the ground near the automobile, Bunker Blue climbed to the seat near the steering wheel and pulled a lever. All at once there was a grinding noise and the van started slowly off.

“That’s the self-starter,” explained Bunker. “I didn’t throw in the gears. The self-starter is strong enough to run the auto a little while all by itself, if it isn’t too heavily loaded. That’s a big improvement.”

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"That's what!" cried Bunny. His sister did not know much about electric starters and such things, but Bunny, through having asked Bunker Blue many questions, had come to learn considerable about the machinery.

"Hurry, children! You must come to breakfast!" called Mrs. Brown. "You may look at the auto another time. After breakfast we'll have to pack it and get ready for the trip."

"We're coming!" cried Bunny and Sue, and with last looks at the big car, which was to be their home for some time to come, the children ran in to breakfast.

"Now, Bunny and Sue," said Mr. Brown, as he made ready to go to his office, "one thing I want you to do is to pick out what toys you want to take with you. They can not be very many, so pick out those you like best."

"Oh, Bunny!" cried Sue. "You take your 'lectricity train that you got back from the hermit, and I'll take my Teddy bear, Sallie Malinda with her 'lectric-light eyes."

"No," said Bunny, shaking his head. "My electric train takes up too much room. I'm going to take my popgun that shoots corks, and maybe I can scare away any cows that get in front of our auto."

"All right. But I'm going to take Sallie Malinda," declared Sue.

While she was getting it out from among her playthings, Bunny went out to look at the big automobile again. He climbed up to the seat. Bunker Blue, after bringing it up to the Brown house so Mrs. Brown could pack in it the things she wanted, had gone back to the dock.

"I wish I could steer this machine," murmured Bunny as he took his seat at the wheel. "I could, too, if they'd only let me. I wish they would."

He twisted the steering wheel to and fro, playing that he was guiding the big car. Suddenly he heard a grinding sound, as when Bunker Blue had been on the seat, and, to Bunny's astonishment, the big van, the wheel of which he held, began to move slowly around the drive which circled the Brown home.

CHAPTER V

Where is splash?

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Bunny Brown, as he felt himself being carried along in the automobile. "What has happened?"

The automobile kept on moving, and Bunny held his hands on the steering wheel. He knew this must be done whenever any machine, like an automobile, was moving.

“I’ve either got to stop it, or—or steer it along the curved path so it won’t run into anything,” whispered Bunny Brown to himself. “I don’t know what makes me go but I’m going, and I’m keeping going, so I’ve got to steer.”

And steer Bunny did. Fortunately though the car was large, it was easily steered, for Mr. Brown had it made that way so his wife could take the wheel when she cared to.

Mrs. Brown could drive an ordinary automobile and she could steer well. So while Mr. Brown was having the big auto-van made over he had the steering part changed so that the steering wheel turned from side to side very easily. And as Bunny was a sturdy chap he had no trouble about this part.

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The auto-van kept on moving and Bunny noticed that it was going up a little hill in the driveway that went all the way around the house.

"I don't see what makes it go uphill all by itself," said Bunny to himself, giving the steering wheel a little turn, as there was a curve in the pathway just ahead of him. "If I were running *downhill* I'd know what made it go—the same thing that makes my sled slide downhill in Winter. But if this auto stood on the level I don't see what started it, nor why it keeps on going *uphill*. Bunker Blue must have left the brakes off."

Bunny looked at the handle brake and at the one worked by the foot pedal. Both were off, for Bunker had released them when he left the car, since it stood on a level bit of the driveway.

"But what makes it go?" asked Bunny again. Then, as he heard the low grinding noise, he remembered the self-starter, which Bunker had spoken of.

"I must have kicked the handle or touched it," thought Bunny, "and that started the machine. I don't know how to stop it. I guess I'd better—Oh, whee! There's a tree I'm going to smash into!" cried Bunny Brown.

The thought of getting out of the way of the tree drove from Bunny's mind, for the time being, every other thought. He must not hit the tree which grew a little over the side of the driveway.

"I've got to steer out of the way, that's what I've got to do!" thought Bunny in a flash. "I've got to steer out of the way!"

Once he had made up his mind to that, he did not think so much about the motion of the automobile. That could be taken care of later.

"Let's see, which way do I turn the wheel to get out of the way of the tree," thought Bunny. He had often been in boats with his father and Bunker Blue, and sometimes, when the way was clear, he had been allowed to steer. Once or twice, while out with his mother in her car, she had let him steer along a quiet road.

He was closer to the tree now. The automobile was not moving very fast, and perhaps if it had hit the tree it would not have done much damage. But Bunny did not know that, and then, too, he might be hurt in case the big car hit the tree. So he was going to do his best to avoid it.

Like a flash it came to Bunny.

"I must turn the steering wheel the way I want the auto to go!"

No sooner said than done. Bunny gave the wheel a twist. Then he saw the auto slowly move that way, and away from the tree. It went past with a few inches to spare, but Bunny had not acted any too soon.

Now he was on the straight part of the driveway again, at the back of the house, and all he had to do was to hold the steering wheel steady, and the automobile would move itself along.

“But there’s another curve by the kitchen door,” thought Bunny. “I wonder if I’ll get around that all right.”

On went the automobile. As it rolled slowly past the kitchen, Mary, the cook, looked out and saw the small boy at the steering wheel, which seemed almost as large as he was.

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"Oh, Bunny! Bunny! Sure an' what in the world are ye doin'?" she cried.

"Please don't make me look at you," begged Bunny. "I've got to steer straight until I get to the curve and then I've got to twist around, an' that's very, very hard to do, Mary. So please don't interrupt me."

But Mary had seen enough to cause alarm. She rushed to the sitting room where Mrs. Brown was looking at a pile of toys Sue had brought down to take on the trip.

"Oh, Mrs. Brown! Mrs. Brown! Sure, an' the likes of a little boy like him runnin' the big car! Sure, it's kilt he'll be intirely!"

"What do you mean, Mary?"

"What do I mean? Sure, an' I mean that Bunny, the darlin' boy, has gone off in the big movin' van auto!"

"Bunny in that auto? Impossible!"

"Look for yourself!" exclaimed Mary, pointing to the window.

At that moment the auto went rolling past, with Bunny at the wheel, as brave as life.

"Bunny Brown!" exclaimed his mother, dashing for the door.

"I—I got around the curve all right, Momsie!" he shouted in glee, and he raised one hand from the wheel to wave it to her.

But at that instant the auto gave a wobble, and Bunny had to bring his waving hand back on the wheel to keep the car straight.

"Bunny! Bunny!" cried his mother, running down the drive after the machine. "Where are you going?"

"I—I don't know," he called back to her. "The auto got started and I can't stop it!"

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried Mrs. Brown. For the seat of the car was very high, and though Bunny had managed to reach it, for he was a good tree-climber, it would hardly have been possible for Mrs. Brown to try to get up with her skirts on and when the auto was moving. It had been still when Bunny climbed to the seat.

"Oh, Bunny!" wailed his mother. "Mary! Telephone for Mr. Brown to come home—quick!"

"I won't be hurt!" called Bunny. "All I've got to do is to keep going on around and around and around the driveway until the storage battery gives out. That's what's running the car now."

"Oh, but you *must* be stopped," cried Mrs. Brown, who managed to keep alongside the slowly moving auto. "You might hit something!"

"I steered out of the way of a tree, all the same," said Bunny proudly. "I was 'most going to run into it, but I didn't. I 'membered which way to steer."

"Oh, I'm so frightened," moaned Mrs. Brown. Then seeing Bunker Blue coming up the path with a message on which he had been sent by Mr. Brown, Bunny's mother called to him:

"Oh, Bunker, stop the auto! Bunny started it somehow. He's ridden nearly all around the drive, but he can't stop!"

"It's running on the battery," said Bunker, after listening a moment to the electric hum. Then he swung himself up on the seat of the moving car beside Bunny, shut off the electric starter and put on the brakes.

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"There you are, Bunny!" cried Bunker. "Right as can be!"

"I steered her nearly all the way around the house," said the small boy with pride.

"But you must never do it again," commanded his mother. "Never! Oh, how you frightened me, Bunny!"

"I'm sorry! I won't do it again," said the little fellow; and he really meant it.

"How did you come to do it?" asked Bunker.

"It just did itself," said the small boy. "I climbed up on the seat, and made believe I was steering, just like you or daddy, when, all of a sudden, off she went. I 'most busted down a tree, but I didn't really. And I went all around the house. I guess now daddy will let me steer the car out on the road."

"Not for a few days yet," said Bunker Blue with a laugh.

"Mr. Brown told me to tell you," he went on to Mrs. Brown, "that he would go a day earlier than he counted on, if you could get ready."

"It won't take me long to pack," said Mrs. Brown. "But why didn't he telephone?"

"Our machine is out of order. The men are fixing it, and anyhow I had to come up this way."

"Well, I'm glad you came in time," said Mrs. Brown, as she led Bunny back to the house. "You are very good, Bunker."

"Yes, and I want you to show me how to stop that electric starter when it starts to start," said Bunny.

"Some day—maybe," promised Bunker, smiling.

"Well, if we're going sooner, I'll have to hurry up and get my things packed," said Bunny. "Have you got yours, Sue?"

"Most of 'em. You ought to see how bright my Teddy bear's eyes shine since daddy put new batteries inside Sallie Malinda," rattled on Sue. "I can 'most see to read my Mother Goose by them in the dark."

"Well, I'm going to get my things ready," said Bunny.

The next few days were busy ones in the Brown home. The big automobile was packed with bed clothes and with things for the children, their father and mother and Uncle Tad to wear, and also with things to eat.

At last, one morning, all was ready for the start.

“Good-bye,” waved Mary, the cook, who was to have a vacation, while the Browns were away.

“Good-bye!” called Bunny and Sue, and then Mr. Brown, who was at the steering wheel, while Uncle Tad, Bunny, Sue and their mother rode inside, started the car, and Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue were off on an auto tour.

Merrily they rode along, Bunny and Sue talking happily, when, all at once Bunny cried:

“Wait! Hold on! Where is Splash?”

CHAPTER VI

TWO DOGS

Mr. Brown as soon as he heard Bunny's cry of “Wait!” at once shut off the power from the big automobile, and brought it to a stop. He turned to look through the little window at the back of the front seat against which he leaned, and asked:

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"What's the matter?"

"Oh, Daddy, we've forgotten Splash!" wailed Bunny.

"We've left him behind," chattered Sue. "I saw him and Dix—that's Fred Ward's dog—playing together, and I thought of course Splash would come with us. I forgot, and left one of the funny clown dresses for Sallie Malinda up in my room, so I went to get it, and then Splash and Dix were away down at the end of the yard and I didn't think any more about our dog."

"I didn't either," said Bunny. "But he always has come with us and I thought he would this time."

"Are you sure he isn't somewhere in the auto, under one of the cots asleep?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I'll look," said Uncle Tad, and he did, but without finding Splash.

"I forgot all about him," admitted Mrs. Brown, and her husband said the same thing.

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Mr. Brown, as soon as every one was satisfied that the dog was not in the big auto-van.

"Do? Why, we've got to go back after him, of course!" cried Bunny.

"We couldn't go without Splash," announced Sue. "He'd be so lonesome for us that he'd cry, and then he'd start out to find us and maybe get lost and we'd never find him again. Go back after him, Daddy! It isn't very far."

"All right," said good-natured Mr. Brown. "I'm glad we're not in a hurry. Still I'd like to keep going, now that we've started. But please, all of you, make sure nothing else is forgotten. For we don't want to go back another time. All ready to turn around and march backward," and he backed the big automobile at a wide place in the road, for it needed plenty of room in which to turn.

Slowly the big car made its way back to the Brown home. Mary, the cook, was the first to see it, and, running to the door, she cried:

"Oh, whatever you do, come in and sit down if only for a minute, some of you! Oh, do come in and sit down!"

"What for, Mary?" asked Mrs. Brown. "Has anything happened?"

“No, but ‘tis easy to see you’ve forgotten somethin’; and when that happens if you don’t sit down, or turn your dress wrong side out, bad luck is sure to foller you when you start off again. So come in and sit down, as that’s easier than turning a dress.”

“Oh, let me turn my knickerbockers outside in!” cried Bunny. “That will be as good as you or Sue, Momsie, turning your dresses. It’s easy for me. Then I can make-believe I’m a tramp, and I’ll run on ahead and beg for some bread and butter for my starving family,” and he imitated, in such a funny way, the whine of some of the tramps who called at the Brown kitchen door, that his mother laughed and Sue said:

“Oh, Momsie, let me turn my dress wrong-side out, too, and I can play tramp with Bunny. That will be fun!”

“No, you mustn’t do that,” said Mrs. Brown. “While we’re hunting for Splash—who isn’t in sight. Where can he be?—we’ll go in and sit down a moment to please Mary.”

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"Would we have bad luck if we didn't?" asked Bunny.

"Not at all. But some persons, like Mary, believe in them; and Mary is very fond of us. Even if we do not believe in some of the things those we like believe in, as long as it does no harm to our beliefs, we can do them to please a friend."

Even Mr. Brown, because he liked Mary, went in and sat down for a minute with the others.

"Now you've done away with the bad luck," said the cook with a smile. "What was it you came back for?"

"Splash," answered Bunny.

"He didn't come with us," added Sue.

"Well, it's no wonder, the funny way he's cuttin' up with that dog next door," said Mary.

"What did he do?" asked Bunny. "Was it funny? Please tell us, Mary."

"Well, it might have been funny for him, but it wasn't for me," said the cook, though she could not help smiling. "The two dogs was playin' tag on the lawn. I had some napkins spread out on the grass to bleach, and what did that dog Dix do but run down in the brook, and then come back with his feet all mud and run over my napkins. Sure, I had to wash 'em all again. That's what them two dogs did. The bad luck was just startin' in when you come back, an' it's good you did, to sit down a bit an' take it off."

"But we must get on again," said Mr. Brown. "So hurry, Bunny and Sue. Find Splash. If he's muddy make him swim through the brook and clean himself off. A run along the sunny road will soon dry him."

"But don't let him splash your clean clothes, children," called their mother after them, as the two ran off together to find the missing dog.

"I hear them barking!" called Bunny, as he and his sister hurried toward the end of the yard.

"So do I." Then, a moment later, the little girl added: "There they are!" and she pointed to the two dogs playing on the green lawn not far from a little brook that ran through Mr. Brown's grounds.

"Here, Splash! Splash!" called Bunny.

The dogs stopped their playing, and looked toward the children. As soon as Splash saw his little master and mistress he came rushing toward them as fast as he could.

“Don’t let him jump on me and get my dress muddy!” cried Sue. “He’s been in the mud just awful!”

“So he has,” said Bunny Brown. “Down, Splash! Down!” he called, as the dog neared Sue. Splash made all the signs he knew to show how glad he was to see Bunny and Sue, but he did not get up on his hind legs and put his paws on Sue’s shoulders, as he sometimes did.

“Oh, Splash, you’re awful dirty!” cried Sue. “You must run in the brook, where the water is clean, and where there are white pebbly stones instead of mud on the bottom, to wash yourself. You’ve got to go in too, Dix.”

Dix barked “bow-wow,” to show he did not mind, I suppose.

“Go on in, Splash!” cried Bunny, snapping his fingers and pointing at the brook. “Go in and wash!”

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But though the Browns' dog was usually ready for a frolic in the water he did not seem to be so just now. He ran back and forth, down to the edge of the stream and back again, getting his paws wet, but nothing else.

"Oh, you must go in and have your bath if you are to come with us!" cried Sue. "Go on in, Splash!"

But not even for Sue would Splash go in, until finally Bunny cried:

"Oh, I know a way to make him!"

"How?" asked Sue.

"Just throw a stick into the water, and he'll go after it and bring it back. We'll throw it far out."

"Oh, that's right!" cried Sue. "We'll do that."

No sooner had the children picked up sticks than the two dogs, who had started to play "tag" themselves, knew what was up. They both loved to go into the water after sticks.

"Throw 'em far out now!" cried Bunny. He tossed his to the middle of the brook, and Sue flung hers nearly as far, for she was a good thrower—almost as good as Bunny.

Dix swam after Sue's stick, and Splash went for Bunny's. In a minute they had brought them ashore and dropped them at the children's feet, looking up into their faces as much as to say:

"Do it again! We love to chase sticks!"

And then, just as dogs always do when they come from the water, they gave themselves big shakes.

"Look out, Sue!" called Bunny.

But he was too late. A shower of drops from Splash went all over Sue's dress, and some of the drops were not clean water, either.

"Oh dear!" she cried. "Now I'll have to change my dress!"

"Never mind," said Bunny. "You run up to the house and get that done, and I'll throw the two sticks into the water. Then Splash and Dix will go in again, and when they come out they'll be cleaner. I won't come back to the house with them until they are good and clean."

Once more Bunny tossed the sticks, as Sue went up to change her dress. When her mother saw her she cried:

“Oh dear, Sue! How did that happen?”

Sue told her.

“Well, I hope Bunny gets the dogs clean this time,” said Mrs. Brown as she took Sue upstairs to put another dress on her. This did not take long, and a little while afterward Bunny came running up from the brook with the two dogs, dripping wet from their baths.

“Quick, Momsie and Sue!” he called to his mother and sister. “Get in the auto before the dogs shower you again with water. I’ve got ’em good and clean now. I made ’em go in four times after the sticks.”

“Did they shake any water on you?” asked Mr. Brown.

“Not much,” said Bunny. “Besides, my clothes are dark and the mud on them won’t show. Now don’t go away again, Splash, ’cause we’re going on a long auto tour, and you want to come with us.”

All were soon in the auto again, and as they started off, with more “good-byes” and “good lucks,” Bunny and Sue made sure that this time Splash followed.

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"Now he's started he won't turn back," said Mr. Brown. "He just missed us before, thinking, I suppose, if he saw us go, that we would come back."

The big automobile traveled on for about an hour, and they were several miles from the Brown home when Bunny, looking out of the rear door of the auto-van cried:

"Why there's Dix, Fred Ward's dog, following us along with Splash! Look!"

"So he is," said Mrs. Brown. "Oh, dear! These dogs! What are we going to do?"

CHAPTER VII

DIX IN TROUBLE

"Is Dix really following us?" asked Mr. Brown, as, once more, he stopped the big automobile.

"He seems to be," answered Mrs. Brown. "He and Splash are trotting along together as happy as two clams."

"Clams can't trot," said Bunny quickly.

"No, but they can be happy," said his mother. "And Splash and Dix seem to be happy, now, trotting along together after us."

"They're altogether too happy," said Mr. Brown. "I wonder how we're going to get Dix back home? Mr. and Mrs. Ward think as much of him as we do of Splash, and they'll be sorry to have him run away."

"We must try to send him home some way," said Mrs. Brown. "Bunny, you have a pretty good way with dogs, suppose you get out and try to drive Dix back home. Tell him we love him, think he's a nice dog and all that, but we believe it isn't best for him to come with us now."

"All right, I will," said Bunny, and he hopped down from the automobile, which had a little set of steps at the back to make getting in and out easy. Though Bunny, it is true, generally jumped out, not using the steps at all.

While the big automobile had been traveling on, Splash, knowing he was a member of this party, had gone along as a matter of course. And, perhaps, in some kind of dog language (which I am sure there must be) he had said to his friend Dix something like this:

“Come along, old chap. The folks are going for a little excursion into the country. I know they are, for once before we traveled like this, and it was jolly fun. There’ll be good things to eat, and no end of cats to chase, too, if you like that.”

“Well, I used to like it,” Dix said—perhaps.

“Then come along,” urged Splash. “I’m sure the folks will be glad to have you.”

“All right, I will,” Dix may have answered.

And so it was he had run along, playing beside the road with Splash. And it was not until the automobile had gone several miles that the family noticed that another dog besides their own was following them.

“Drive him back home as your mother told you, Bunny,” said the little boy’s father.

Bunny ran back to where Dix and Splash were rolling over and over on the grass. They seemed to be enjoying themselves.

“Go on home! Go on home!” cried Bunny.

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At once Splash and Dix stopped playing and ran to the little boy. As his mother had said, Bunny knew how to talk to dogs in a way they could understand.

"Go on home!" said the little boy again, very earnestly.

Splash looked up in surprise. He was not used to being sent home.

"Oh, I don't mean you," said Bunny. "I mean you, Dix! Mother says we like you very much, and would like to have you with us, but your folks want you home with them. So go on back. Go home, I say!"

Bunny stamped his foot, spoke as sternly as he could without being too cross, and pointed back toward Bellemere.

Dix looked into Bunny's face a minute, and then slowly the dog's tail drooped between his legs and he slunk off, with what was really a sad face looking at Bunny and Splash. It was as if he said:

"Say, look here, Splash! I thought you invited me on this excursion, and now that boy of yours goes and drives me home."

"Well, I can't help it," Splash seemed to say. "There is something wrong somewhere."

Bunny felt sad at having to drive Dix back home.

"I'm sorry, old fellow," he said, and his voice was so kind that Dix turned and came running back.

"No! No! You mustn't do that!" cried Bunny, seeing what his kind words had done. "Go on back home, Dix!"

Once again Dix's tail drooped between his legs, and he turned back. He went on for some distance, never turning to look back.

"There, I guess he'll not follow us any more," said Bunny. "Come on, Splash. You get up in the automobile and ride with us. Then Dix won't see you, and want to come along."

Bunny led his own dog back to the big car, Splash going willingly enough, though once or twice he looked back at Dix, who was walking slowly the homeward road.

Again the auto started off.

"This is two delays we've had," said Mr. Brown. "If we have another I'll begin to think there is something in Mary's idea of bad luck, after all."

It was Sue who discovered Dix the next time. As the automobile was about to go around a curve the little girl gazed out of the back window and saw the Ward dog trotting happily along toward the moving automobile.

“Oh, Daddy, look there!” cried Sue. “Dix is coming after us again! What are we going to do?”

“Is that dog following us once more?” asked Mr. Brown, as he stopped the automobile.

“Yes, he is; and he seems happy.”

“Oh dear!” said Mrs. Brown. “What trouble these dogs are giving us to-day!”

“Well, this is the third trouble, and let us hope it will be the last,” said Mr. Brown.

“Are you going to send Dix back again?” asked Bunny.

“No, I don’t think it would do any good. Besides, we are now about ten miles from home. He might not find his way.”

“That would be too bad,” said Mrs. Brown. “The Wards would not want to lose their dog.”

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"I presume the only thing for us to do is to turn around and carry him back again," said Mr. Brown slowly.

Just then Splash, who had been lying inside under one of the sleeping cots, awoke, and, looking out of the rear door of the auto, saw his friend Dix trotting merrily along.

"Bow-wow!" barked Splash.

"Wow-wuff-wow!" answered Dix.

That meant in dog language I suppose:

"Well, I'm glad to see you again, old fellow."

"And I'm glad to see you," said Dix. "I hope they don't drive me back again. But I went only to the first turn in the road. There I waited awhile and then came on. I could easily tell which way you came by the big wheel-marks."

"Well, I guess there's no hope for it," said Mr. Brown, as the two dogs stopped barking. "It's turn around again and take Dix back with us to his home. It's a good thing we're not in a hurry."

He was about to turn the big car, and Dix had come to a stop a short distance away from it when Bunny suddenly cried:

"Oh, I've thought of a way to do it!"

"A way to do what?" his father asked.

"Take care of Dix."

"Do you mean to ask somebody going past in another automobile to take Dix to Bellemere?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"No. But in that house," and Bunny pointed to one not far away, "is a telephone. I can see the wires, and they're just like our telephone wires. Why can't we call up Mr. Ward and ask him if we can take his dog along with us?"

"Take Dix with us!" cried Mrs. Brown. "What would we do with two dogs?"

"Well, they'll be company for each other," said Sue, who had taken a great liking to Dix.

"And Dix wants to come," added Bunny. "You see how hard it is to drive him back."

"But we don't need him, and two dogs are harder to look after than one," said Mr. Brown. "Dix has made trouble enough to-day, though part of it was Splash's fault."



It was then Bunny had his fine idea.

“Oh, I know the best reason in the world for taking Dix with us!” he cried. “Wait and I’ll ‘splain it all to you. Just let Dix and Splash play together until I get through talking.”

“Well, let’s hear your idea, Bunny,” said Mr. Brown with a smile, as he leaned back in his seat and rested his back. Splash, seeing his dog friend, leaped from the car and the two were soon playing together in the road as merrily as ever.

CHAPTER VIII

DIX AND THE COW

“Now,” said Bunny, as he sat down on a little stool in the auto to talk to his father and mother—and Sue, of course, and Uncle Tad, who were all listening. “Now it wouldn’t hurt an awful lot to take Dix with us, would it?”

“What do you mean?” asked his mother.

“I mean Dix wouldn’t eat much more than Splash, would he?”

“Oh, I guess if it comes to feeding dogs, two come about as cheaply as one,” said Mr. Brown with a laugh. “But what’s the idea, Bunny?”

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"Well, I'd like to have Dix come along with us then. It will save time now in taking him back."

"Yes, it will do *that*," said Mr. Brown. "And it's quite a way back home this time."

"And Splash will have company to play with all the while," went on Bunny. "Two dogs are happier than one, aren't they?" he asked. "If two dogs eat more than one then two must be happier than one."

"It's a new way of looking at it, but I guess it may be true," laughed Mrs. Brown. "But are you doing all this talking, Bunny, just to have company for Splash?"

"No indeedy I'm not!" exclaimed Bunny. "I haven't 'splained it all."

"What else is there?" asked Mr. Brown, laughing.

"Well, if Mr. Ward will let us take Dix along—and you can find out about that over the telephone—then maybe we can find Fred."

For a moment no one spoke after Bunny had announced his plan. His father and mother looked sharply at him, and so did Sue and Uncle Tad.

"How can Dix find Fred?" asked Sue.

"'Cause didn't the bloodhounds find the runaway slaves in Uncle Tom's Cabin?" demanded Bunny.

"Yes," answered Sue. "I 'member that."

"Well then, won't Dix find Fred the same way?" went on Bunny. "He can smell his tracks along the road and we'll find that runaway boy a lot quicker than if we didn't have his dog along. Fred and Dix were always together, and I guess Fred couldn't have run away if Dix had seen him. So if we take Dix along, and have to look for Fred in big crowds, Dix'll come in 'specially handy."

"Oh, won't that be fun!" cried Sue, clapping her hands. "Do let's take Dix along!"

"I believe Bunny's plan is a good one," said Mr. Brown, after thinking about it a while. "We don't know Fred very well, and he may look different, now that he has gone away from home, from what he did before. His dog would know him, however, no matter how Fred dressed."

"He'd know him even if he had on a Hallowe'en false face, wouldn't he?" asked Sue.

"I guess so," answered Daddy Brown. "Well, I'll go and telephone to Mr. Ward and see what he says."

The people in the house into which the telephone wires ran were very willing Mr. Brown should use the instrument, and he was soon talking to Mr. Ward back in Bellemere.

"Surely you may take Dix with you," said Mr. Ward over the telephone wire. "I only hope he will not be a trouble to you. I know he will make a fuss just as soon as he comes anywhere near Fred. So, in that way, you may be able to trace my boy. I hope you will. His mother hopes so too. She is beside me here as I am talking, and she sends you her thanks. Take Dix with you if you wish."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Sue, when she heard the news. "Aren't you, Bunny? Now we have two dogs!"

"Yes, one will be yours and one mine, until we get back home with Dix. Then we'll each own half of Splash, as we've always done."

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This suited Sue, and, now that the dog question was settled, the automobile started on again.

For a little while everything was peaceful and quiet in the big automobile. Bunny went outside on the front seat with his father, and looked down the road along which they were running. It was a pleasant road, with trees arching across overhead from one side to the other.

Inside the big car Mrs. Brown and Uncle Tad “got things to rights,” as the children’s mother called it, while Sue took out some of her toys, including the big Teddy bear with the electric eyes, whose adventures have been told in the book just before this one.

Bunny and his father talked together on the seat in front. Bunny was interested in whether or not they would find Fred.

“Well, we may and we may not,” said Mr. Brown. “It is true Fred said he was going to run away to Portland, the city where we are going. But we will not be there for some time, and before then Fred may think he does not like it there and go somewhere else.”

“Well, I think Dix will help find him, don’t you?” asked Bunny.

“Yes, I hope so, Son.”

Just then came a call from inside the automobile.

“Who’s ready for dinner?”

[Illustration: THE TWO DOGS CAME WITH A RUSH. *Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on an Auto Tour. Page 79.*]

“I am!” cried Bunny, the first one.

“So am I,” added Sue.

“Then come on! Rations are served,” said Uncle Tad who had been in the army.

He and Mrs. Brown had cooked their first meal on the gasoline stove in the little kitchen and dining room combined, and it was now ready to serve.

Bunny clambered in by way of the front seat and took his place at the little table.

“I think we had better stop beside the road while we eat,” said Mr. Brown. “This automobile is all right for traveling, but the roads are so rough here that I may spill my tea. So we’ll anchor and eat.”

“Daddy thinks we’re in a boat I guess, when he talks about anchoring,” said Sue, who, more than once, had been out in the big fishing boat with her father.

Then the meal began. There was some cooked meat, for they could carry meat in the ice box, baked potatoes, and, best of all, some pie.

It was while he was eating his pie and drinking his milk that Bunny suddenly cried:

“The dogs!”

“What about them?” asked Mrs. Brown quickly. “Are they fighting? Where are they, Bunny?”

“Just over in that field playing. But we didn’t call Splash and Dix to dinner.”

“Oh, is that all? I think they can wait a bit,” said Mrs. Brown with a laugh. “By the way you spoke I thought something had happened.”

“Well, this pie tasted good, that’s part of what happened,” said Bunny, with a laugh.

“And then I got to wishing Dix and Splash could have some.”

“I’ll feed them when the rest of you have finished,” promised Mrs. Brown.

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When the meal was over Mrs. Brown gathered up a big plateful of scraps from the table, and gave it to Bunny to feed Dix and Splash.

"Here Dix!" called Bunny, inviting the "company" dog first, which was proper, I suppose. "Here, Dix and Splash!"

The two dogs heard and must have known that they were being called to dinner, for they came with a rush, each one trying to see which would be the first to reach Bunny with the plateful of good food.

"You'd better put the dish on the ground and get away," said Mr. Brown with a laugh. "Otherwise they'll be so glad to see you, Bunny, that they'll knock you down and roll over you."

"I guess they will," said the little boy. So he put the plate of meat, bread and potato scraps on the ground near the big automobile and then stepped back out of the way.

Dix and Splash did not take long to finish the food on the plate, and then they looked up at Bunny and wagged their tails, as if asking for more.

"No more!" called Mrs. Brown to them, for she understood the feeding of dogs. "That will do you until supper."

Seeing they were going to get no more, Dix and Splash ran off together again to have more fun rolling about in the grass.

"Where do you think we shall stop for the night?" asked Mrs. Brown of her husband as they set off once more.

"Just outside the town of Freeburg," he answered. "We'll sleep in the auto, of course, for if we are making a tour this way it's the proper thing to do. But we'll be near enough a town for supplies or anything we may need."

"Goodness! We don't need anything this soon, nor have we a place to put another thing away," protested Mrs. Brown.

Her husband laughed. "However, it's well to be near a town overnight," he said.

So the big automobile chugged on. Mrs. Brown and Uncle Tad washed the dishes and put them away, and then they sat looking out at the side windows and enjoying the trip. Now and then Mr. Brown would talk in through the open window against which the steering wheel seat was built. Bunny and his sister sometimes rode inside, and again outside with Daddy Brown.

“This is lots of fun, I think,” said Bunny, as he sat beside his father, and the auto went rather fast down a hill.

“It’s just great! My Sallie Malinda Teddy bear likes it, too,” put in Sue, who was also on the front seat. Both of them together took up no more room than one grown person, and the front seat was built large enough for two.

Dix and Splash raced on together, sometimes playing a game like wrestling, trying to see which could throw the other, and again rushing along as fast as they could go, sometimes behind, and sometimes in front of the automobile.

At the foot of the hill, down which the automobile had gone rather fast, a man stepped out from a fence beside the road and held up his hand.

“What does that mean?” asked Sue.

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"It means to stop," said her father, as he slowed up the machine.

"What for?" Bunny inquired.

"Well, he may be a constable—that is a kind of a policeman," said Mr. Brown. "He wants us to stop, thinking, maybe, that we were running too fast. But I know we weren't."

"Will he 'rest us?" asked Sue. "If he does I'm going to hide Sallie Malinda. I'm not going to have her locked up!"

"Nothing will happen," said Mr. Brown with a laugh. "I have run an automobile long enough to know what to do."

Mr. Brown brought the big machine to a stop near the spot where the man was standing with upraised hand.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Brown good-naturedly. "Were we going too fast?"

"Oh, nopey!" exclaimed the man with a laugh. "I jest stopped you to see what kind of a show you was givin'."

"What kind of show we are giving?" repeated Mr. Brown in surprise.

"Yep! I thought maybe you was one o' them patent medicine shows that goes 'round in big wagons and stops here and there, and a feller sings, or plays, or somethin', then the head man or woman sells medicine what'll cure everything you ever had in the way of pain or ever expect to have. I thought I'd see what kind of a show you've got."

"We haven't any," laughed Mr. Brown. "You may look in the auto if you like, and see how we live in it. We are traveling for pleasure."

"I see you be, now," said the man after a look. "Wa'al, I'm right sorry I stopped you."

"That's all right," said Mr. Brown pleasantly. "This is a heavy machine, and I don't like to get it to going too fast downhill. It's too hard to stop. So it's just as well we slowed up."

"You see I'm the inspector of all them travelin' shows," went on the man. "Ribbans is my name, Hank Ribbans. Every medicine show or other show that comes to town has to git a permit from me, else they can't show. But you're all right, pass on."

An idea came into Mrs. Brown's head.

"Do you have many shows passing through here, with musicians who play to draw a crowd?" she asked.

“Oh, sartin, surely. 'Bout one once a week as a rule. There was one that showed here two or three nights ago—no, come to think of it now, it was last night. There was a young feller—nothin' but a boy—dressed up in the reddest and bluest suit you ever see. And say, how he could play that old banjo!”

“Oh, a banjo! Maybe it was Fred!” cried Bunny.

The same thought came to his father and mother.

“Tell us about this boy,” requested Mr. Brown. “We are looking for one who plays the banjo,” and he described Fred Ward.

“Well, this can't be the one you're lookin' for,” said Mr. Ribbans. “'Cause this feller was a negro.”

“Maybe he was blacked up like a minstrel,” said Bunny.

“I couldn't say as to that,” returned the inspector. “Anyhow they paid for their license all right, and they sold a powerful lot o' Dr. Slack's Pain Killer. Then they went on out of town. That's all I know. Well, you don't need a license from me; so go ahead, folks!”

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He waved good-bye to them as they went off again.

Bunny and Sue were eager to ask questions about the colored boy who played the banjo for the medical show.

“Do you think he could have been Fred?” asked Bunny.

“It is possible,” answered his father.

“Maybe we can find him,” added Sue.

“We’ll make inquiries about this show in the next town we come to,” said Mr. Brown.

But as the next town was the one outside of which they were to spend the night, they decided to put off until the next day asking questions about the colored banjo player.

Uncle Tad and Mr. Brown helped Mrs. Brown get the supper. When it was over there was a large platter full of good things left for the two dogs. They were hungry, for they had run far that day, and they ate up every scrap.

Then they stretched out for a while near a campfire Mr. Brown made under some trees, for it was a little cool in the evenings. As the children had been up early that morning, Mrs. Brown told them they must be early in bed, and after watching the fire until their eyes began to shut of themselves, Bunny and Sue started for their little bunks.

Just as they were getting undressed, though it was scarcely dark, the barking of dogs was heard down the road.

“That’s Dix and Splash!” exclaimed Bunny. “And something must have happened. Splash wouldn’t bark that way if there was nothing the matter.”

“Here comes Dix now,” said Sue, looking out of the automobile window. “And oh, Bunny! Look what he’s brought home with him!”

“What is it?” asked Bunny, whose bunk was on the other side of the big car.

“It’s a cow. Dix is leading home a cow on the end of a rope!” exclaimed Sue.

CHAPTER IX

TWO DISAPPEARANCES

For a moment the two children looked out of the automobile windows at the strange sight. Then, unable longer to think of going to bed when there was likely to be some

excitement, they both came out from behind the curtains that screened off their cots, and cried together:

“Dix has got a cow!”

“Dix has got a *what?*” asked Mrs. Brown, thinking she had not understood.

“Dix has got a *cow!*” went on Bunny. “He’s leading her by a rope. I guess he thinks it’s our cow.”

“Well, what will those dogs do next?” asked Mr. Brown, who was reading a newspaper he had purchased from a passing boy, who rode his route on a bicycle.

“It’s true enough—about the cow,” said Uncle Tad, who was outside the automobile putting out the last embers of the campfire, that there might be no danger during the night. “One of the dogs is leading home a ‘cow critter,’ as some farmers call them.

“It’s Dix,” he went on a moment later as the two dogs, both barking excitedly, came close to the big moving van, Dix having hold of the rope that was tied fast to the cow’s neck. He was leading her along, and the cow did not appear to mind. “Dix must have found the cow wandering along the road,” went on Uncle Tad, “and, thinking we might need one, he just brought her home.”

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"Very thoughtful of Dix, I'm sure," said Mr. Brown, who had come outside as had his wife, while Bunny and Sue remained in their pajamas in the doorway. "He probably meant it kindly, but what will the man think whose cow she is? Well, what's the matter with you, Splash?" asked Mr. Brown, for that dog, too, was barking very loudly. "Did you see the cow first, and wouldn't Dix let you have a share in bringing her here? I guess that was it. Never mind, you shall lead the cow home, if we can find out where she belongs."

He patted Splash's head as he spoke, and talked to the dog almost as he would have talked to a small boy. And I think Splash understood, for he wagged his tail, and seemed pleased.

Dix led the cow up to Mr. Brown, and there, dropping the end of the rope, wagged his tail, barked once or twice and looked up as though he were saying:

"Well, didn't I do pretty well for the first day? I found a cow for you. That will more than pay my board. I'll try and find something else to-morrow."

Then, as if satisfied that he had done his duty, Dix went off to hunt for a bone he had buried after his supper, and Splash went with him.

"Well, what in the world are we going to do with it?" asked Mrs. Brown. "We can't keep this cow; that's sure!"

"We might tie her to one of the auto wheels," said Mr. Brown.

"No, thank you!" exclaimed his wife. "She'd moo all night, and keep us awake."

"But we can't turn her loose," said Mr. Brown. "She might wander off and be stolen, and then the owner would blame us, though it might not be our fault. Since Dix has brought the cow to us, no matter whether we wanted her or not, we've got to look after her somehow."

"Couldn't Dix take her back?" asked Bunny, from where he stood in the doorway with Sue.

"That's perhaps a good idea," replied Mr. Brown. "Though I don't know that Dix could exactly take her back. I think I'd better do it myself. It's early yet, and probably the farmer who owns the cow is out looking for her. I'll let Splash lead the cow back along the road, and I'll go with him. We may meet the farmer."

"Well, don't be gone too long," begged Mrs. Brown. "The first day is always hard and we want to get to bed early."

"I'll do my best," promised Mr. Brown. "Come on, Splash! It's your turn now to lead the cow!"

Splash barked joyfully, and seemed glad that he was to have something to do with the big horned animal, who was contentedly chewing her cud, lying down beside the automobile. She appeared quite contented wherever she was.

"Oh, let us come!" begged Bunny and Sue, as they saw their father go off down the road with Splash leading the cow by the rope.

"No, indeed! You youngsters get to bed!" said Mrs. Brown. "You ought to be glad of the chance. You must be tired."

"We're not—a single bit!" declared Bunny, but though he and Sue begged hard, and teased to go to see the cow taken home, their mother would not let them.

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It was quite dark when Mr. Brown came back. The children were asleep, but Mrs. Brown and Uncle Tad were sitting up reading.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Brown, as she noticed how tired her husband looked. "Did you have far to go?"

"About two miles, and mostly uphill. But I found the cow's owner."

"Did you? That's good! How did you manage?" asked Uncle Tad.

"Well, I was going along, Splash leading the cow as proud as a peacock, when, all of a sudden, I saw a man hurrying toward me. He seemed very much excited, and asked me if that was *my* cow the dog was leading.

"I told him it was not; that one of the dogs that was with us on our auto trip had brought her in; and that I was bringing her back, looking for the owner."

"'I'm him,' he said. 'And I can soon prove the critter's mine.'"

"I told him I hoped she was, for I was tired of walking with her. So he stopped at two or three farmers' houses, and they all said the cow belonged to Mr. Adrian Richmond, who was the man that met me. So I left the cow with him and came on home, for this *does* look like home," he added, as he gazed around the small but cozy room in the auto-van.

"Did the farmer tell you how Dix came to lead off his cow?" asked Uncle Tad.

"No, he only guessed that the animal must have pulled loose from her stake and wandered off down the road. She was used to being led home every night by the farmer's dog, so she didn't make any objections."

"Then Dix must be a sort of a cow dog," remarked Mrs. Brown, and later it was learned that Dix had once been on a western ranch and had helped the cowboys with their work.

So with the cow disposed of, and the two dogs asleep on some old blankets under the automobile, the little party of travelers settled down for the night. They all slept soundly, and in the morning the first thing Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue wanted to know about was the cow. Their father told them all that had happened.

"That Dix is a great dog!" cried Bunny. "I'm glad we brought him with us."

"So'm I!" echoed Sue. "And maybe to-day he'll find Fred."

"How can he?" asked Bunny.

“Because you know the funny old man who stopped us, to see if we were a traveling show, said that boy banjo player was to come to this town. And even if the one he saw was colored it might be Fred blacked up.”

“That’s so,” agreed Bunny. “We’ll get daddy to ask.”

A breakfast was cooked in the auto and eaten out-of-doors, because it was such a lovely morning. More than once as they ate in the shadow of the big car other autoists, passing, waved a merry greeting to the happy little party, and as horse-drawn carts and wagons passed along the road on their way into town, many curious glances were cast at the travelers.

It was rather a strange way of making a journey, but it suited the Browns, and they preferred their big automobile to any railroad train they could have had.

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After breakfast they set off again, passing through the city.

Mr. Brown asked several persons there about the traveling medicine show with the colored banjo player. Many had seen it, but some were sure the banjo-playing boy was a real negro, while others said he was only blackened up. At any rate the show had traveled on, and no one knew where it would be next met with.

"Well, it may have been Fred, and it may not," said Mr. Brown. "I must write and ask Mr. Ward if his son could imitate a negro, singing and playing the banjo, and whether he ever dressed up and did that sort of thing."

The progress of the big automobile through the town attracted many persons, not a few of whom believed it to be a traveling show, and they were disappointed when some sort of performance was not given.

The Browns were soon out in the sunny country again, traveling along a shady level road. Bunny and Sue played with their toys, and at noon, when they stopped for lunch, they had a romping game of tag in the woods and fields near-by.

After the noon rest they went on again, the two dogs running along, sometimes ahead of the automobile and sometimes behind it.

"I'm going to put darling Sallie Malinda to sleep," said Sue after a while. "And I'm going to let her sleep near the back door of the car."

"Why?" asked Bunny, who was very fond of asking questions.

"She isn't feeling very well, and the air will do her good," answered Sue, who made her "make-believe" very real to herself.

So, having made a nice bed of rags for her Teddy bear, Sue put Sallie Malinda to sleep near the rear door of the auto and got out one of her books to look at the pictures. Bunny was building some sort of house with some new blocks his father had bought for him, but he was not having very good luck, for the motion of the auto made the house topple over almost as soon as Bunny had it built.

After a while Sue thought her Teddy bear had had enough sleep near the auto door, so she went to take her in. But when she reached the rag bed Sallie Malinda was not there.

"Oh, my Teddy bear is gone!" cried Sue. "Oh, Bunny, do you think she falled out? Daddy! Daddy! Stop the auto! My Teddy bear is lost!"

Mr. Brown stopped the car at once, though he did not understand all of what Sue said. The little girl told him what had happened.

“Sallie Malinda gone!” cried Mother Brown. “That’s too bad! She must have been jostled off when the auto went over a bump. I think we’ll have to go back and look for her,” she said to her husband.

Then Bunny gave some more news.

“Dix is gone too!” he cried. “I’ve been watching a long while and I haven’t seen him. And Splash is acting awful funny—just as if Dix had run away.”

“Hum! This *is* rather strange!” exclaimed Mr. Brown. “Two disappearances at once.”

“What’s disappearcesses?” asked Sue.

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"It means going away—the word your father used does," explained Mrs. Brown with a smile. "But it certainly is strange that Dix and the Teddy bear should go away together."

CHAPTER X

DIX COMES BACK

For a moment Sue stood looking at her mother, seeming to be thinking very hard about something. Then she asked:

"Momsie, do you think Dix took Sallie Malinda away?"

"Well, it seems so," said Mrs. Brown. "That is, if Dix has really gone away. We had better make sure of that, first. There is no question about your Teddy bear's being gone, for I saw her in the rag bed by the back door of the auto not half an hour ago."

"Well, I suppose she either fell out, or Dix, thinking to have a game of tag with her, took her out, though the Teddy bear, with the batteries inside to make her eyes light up, isn't easy for even Dix to carry very far," said Mr. Brown.

"But how are we going to get my darling Sallie Malinda back?" asked Sue, and there were tears in her eyes.

"Daddy will find some way. Won't you, Daddy?" asked Bunny, for he did not like to see his little sister sad.

"Well, the only thing I can see to do is to turn the automobile around and go back to look for Sue's Teddy bear," said Mr. Brown. "He may be lying beside the road where he fell from the auto."

"My Teddy bear isn't a *he*, Daddy!" cried Sue. "She's a *she*! Aren't there *lady* Teddy bears as well as *gentlemen*?"

"Yes, I suppose so," laughed Mr. Brown. "I forgot for the moment that your Teddy's name was Sallie. But whether it's a he or a she I suppose you'd like to have me go back for it, wouldn't you?"

"Indeed I would, Daddy! I don't know what I'd do without Sallie Malinda."

"All right, then we'll turn the auto around."

"We've done about as much going backward as we have going forward on this trip," laughed Uncle Tad. "But still we must get Sue's pet. It wouldn't do to go off and leave *her*."



"I can't understand about Dix, though," said Mrs. Brown. "Surely he wouldn't run away and leave us after he had come this far with us."

"Maybe he is just playing hide-and-go-seek with Splash," said Bunny. "Maybe it's Dix's turn to hide."

"Suppose you call him," suggested Mrs. Brown.

Bunny called and whistled, in a way he had been doing to get Dix to come to him ever since the Ward dog had joined the traveling automobile party. But there came no answering bark, and even Splash seemed surprised when he could not find his playfellow.

"Hi, Splash!" called Bunny. "Where is Dix? Go find him!"

Splash ran around and barked, which was his only way of talking, but he came back frequently to the children, who, with their parents and Uncle Tad, were standing beside the auto, and he did not bring Dix back with him.

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It was as though Splash said:

"I know you want to find Dix, but I don't know where he is. There is no use in my running my legs off to find him, for he is a long way from here."

"Dix possibly has been missing a longer while than we know," said Mr. Brown. "I noticed once, as we were going over a bridge, that Splash went in and had a little swim. But I did not see Dix with him, though I didn't think anything about it at the time. We had that trouble with the engine farther back than that. When I got that fixed Dix was about. But from then on I haven't seen him, and that was some miles back."

"Maybe that's the time my dear Sallie Malinda fell out," said Sue. "Or else Dix took her."

"I don't believe he'd do that," said her father. "He was too well trained. He isn't a puppy any longer, to hide boots, shoes and toys. I don't believe Dix took your Teddy."

"Well, anyhow let's go to find him," said Bunny. "I mean *her*," he added quickly, as he noticed Sue looking sharply at him. "Maybe we'll find Dix and the Teddy bear at the same time."

"If Dix hasn't gone off to find a cow or an elephant or a camel or something like that to make us a present of," said Mrs. Brown with a laugh.

"Oh, Momsie! Do you think Dix would really bring back an elephant?" asked Bunny eagerly.

"No, my dear, I was only fooling. But let's start back, Daddy, for I know Sue will be very anxious to-night about her Teddy bear."

Back they started in the automobile over the road they had just traveled. Now and then they stopped and called Dix, but the dog did not come to them.

Splash added his barks and whines to the general calling but no Dix answered.

"He must be mighty far away," said Bunny.

"Yes, I'm afraid we'll never find him, or my dearest Sallie Malinda either," said Sue, and once more tears came into her eyes.

As the auto went along, in addition to calling for Dix, every one in the party, including the children, had looked along the road for a sight of the Teddy bear that might have fallen from the automobile. But Sallie Malinda was not to be seen, and Sue did not know what to do.

“Well, we’ll go back to where I last noticed that Dix was with us,” said Mr. Brown. “Then if we don’t find your Teddy, Sue, I’ll have to get you another.”

“But I’d rather have Sallie Malinda!”

“I know, dear, but you can name the new one that.”

“Sue’s Teddy’s had lots of adventures,” said Bunny. “The hermit took her, and now she’s lost.”

“Well, I’m not going to give up yet,” said his sister, as she looked carefully along the road.

“But what can have become of Dix?” asked Mrs. Brown. “I can’t understand him.”

“Oh, he may have gone off chasing a rabbit or a squirrel,” said Mr. Brown. “Anyhow we’re almost at the bridge, and the spot where we had the engine trouble is not far beyond.”

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Silently those in the auto looked along the road for a sight of Sue's Teddy. Then suddenly Bunny said,

"No, he didn't!"

"Who didn't what?" asked his father, for Bunny would often make these sudden exclamations.

"Dix didn't go off chasing a rabbit or a squirrel," said Bunny. "There he comes now—with an elephant, I guess," and the little boy pointed down the road.

There was Dix coming back, and he was half dragging and half carrying something that looked like an animal.

On and on came the dog. He seemed very tired. When he saw the automobile he stopped, dropped what he had in his mouth, and lay down beside it. Then he began to bark joyfully.

"Oh, it's my Sallie Malinda! It's my Teddy bear!" cried Sue. "You dear old Dix! You found Sallie Malinda for me!"

And that is just what had happened, they decided after they had talked it over among themselves. Dix must have been running along behind the auto when he saw Sue's pet jostled out. Knowing how the little girl loved her Teddy bear he picked it up and began to half drag and half carry it, for, as Mr. Brown had said, the electrical batteries that made the Teddy's eyes shine, were heavy. Poor Dix had all he could do to drag the Teddy bear, but he would not let go, and the noise made by the auto made it impossible for those in the car to hear his barks, which he must have given.

And so they rode on, paying no attention, but leaving Dix far behind, until Sue discovered the loss of her Teddy bear.

"Oh, you are a dear good dog, and I love you!" cried Sue, hugging the Teddy bear with one arm and Dix with the other. And the dog was plainly overjoyed at being with his friends again.

I suppose the Teddy bear was glad too, but of course she could not even wag her little stub of a tail to show it. However, Sue could make the pet's eyes gleam, which she did again and again.

Nor was the Teddy bear much damaged by being dragged in the dirt, for the roads were not muddy, and Dix had held her up out of the dust as much as he could.

"Oh, but I'm glad to get my darling Sallie Malinda back!" cried Sue.

“Dix is a good dog,” put in Bunny. “He can ride in the auto now, can’t he, Daddy? He must be tired.”

“Yes, get him and Splash both in,” said Mr. Brown. “I think it is going to rain, and I want to get to the next town where we will stay overnight.”

“In a hotel?” asked Bunny.

“No; in our auto, of course.”

The dogs were called in, and Dix seemed glad to rest. Then Daddy Brown turned the big car around and once more they were on their way. It began to rain before they reached the town of Welldon, on the edge of which they were to stop for the night.

But the rain did not matter to those in the big moving van, which was like a little house. They had their supper inside, sat reading or playing games by the electric light, and listened to the rain on the roof, for it came down more and more heavily.

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"Isn't it a nice place?" said Bunny to Sue, as they went to bed.

"The bestest ever!" she cried.

It was about the middle of the night that Bunny was awakened by feeling a queer bumping, sliding motion.

"Why," he cried, sitting up in his bunk, "we must be traveling on in the dark! Daddy! Momsie!" he cried. "What are we moving for, when it's dark?"

"What's that?" cried Mr. Brown suddenly awakening.

"The automobile is running away!" cried Bunny, and outside they could hear a strange roaring sound amid the patter of the rain.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE FLOOD

For a moment all was confusion inside the big automobile. Mr. and Mrs. Brown got up and dressed hastily. Bunny and Sue thought little of doing that until Sue, feeling cold around her bare legs, called to her brother:

"Wrap yourself up in a blanket, Bunny, like an Indian."

"What's going on?" yelled Uncle Tad, from his bunk.

"That's what we're trying to find out," said Mr. Brown.

"Seems to me we're afloat," added Uncle Tad. "We certainly are at sea."

"It does feel so," agreed Daddy Brown, for the automobile was bumping along the roadway, and the motor was not running, either. Something was either pushing or pulling it.

Just then came the howls and whines of the two dogs, Dix and Splash. They had been left out on the front seat of the car, with big curtains hung in front of them so no rain could splatter on them.

"Oh, something's the matter with them!" cried Bunny Brown, and in a few minutes he had opened the window back of the seat and let the frantic dogs leap into the auto. They barked joyfully now, and frisked about Bunny and Sue.

With the opening of the window, however, came in a gust of wind and rain that made Mrs. Brown call:

“Children you’ll catch dreadful colds! Get right to bed this instant.”

“Oh, Mother, we want to stay up and see what’s going to happen,” said Bunny. “Maybe the automobile might tip over.”

“And if we were in bed we’d be all upside down and tangled in the clothes,” added Sue. “Please let us stay up! We’ll wrap in blankets like Indians.”

“Better let them get dressed,” said Mr. Brown in a low voice to his wife. “There’s no telling what has happened.”

“What do you think?” and her voice was anxious.

“Well, it feels as if we were in a stream of some sort, partly afloat. Let the children get dressed,” answered her husband.

Bunny Brown and his sister heard and hastened to their curtained-off bunks. Meanwhile Uncle Tad had closed the window near the front seat and that kept out the wind and rain. And it was raining and blowing hard. Those in the cosy car could hear the drops dash against the panes, while the wind howled around the corners of the machine.

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The automobile itself was bumping along as if, indeed, it was floating down some stream, or had gone to sea like one of Mr. Brown's boats. The dogs had ceased their whining now.

"I guess they were scared, out there all alone," said Bunny, when he was nearly dressed. "I'm glad they're in here with us now."

"So am I," said Sue, as she came out into the sitting room, where Mother Brown had turned on the electric lights. It was a bit cool in the auto, for the storm had taken all the heat from the air, but there was danger in lighting one of the stoves. Though he did not let the children know, Mr. Brown thought there might be a risk of fire if the gasoline stove were lighted, because the big car might overturn.

"Now to see what it's all about," said Mr. Brown, when he and Uncle Tad were fully dressed. "We'll find out if we are adrift on the Atlantic or Pacific ocean, and how to get to shore."

He was putting on his rubber boots and raincoat, and Uncle Tad was doing the same thing. Then Mr. Brown got a lantern and lighted it, for he was going to open the back door of the car to look outside, to see where the flood was taking them. For he was sure now, by the motion of the automobile, that the heavy rain had turned a small stream, near which they had stopped for the night, into a small-sized river, and that had risen high enough, or had come down with force enough, to sweep the big auto-van ahead with it.

But no sooner had Mr. Brown and Uncle Tad opened the back door of the automobile, that a gust of wind blew out the lantern, for there was a hole in the glass enclosing the flame and the wind puffed right through the lantern.

"Well, I can't very well see in the dark," said Mr. Brown, as he came in to light the lantern once more. "It's a very strong wind."

Again he opened the door, but in a second the lantern was blown out once more. Only the electric lights, kept aglow in the car by the storage battery, remained gleaming.

"I ought to have one of those pocket flash lights," said Mr. Brown. "I meant to get a strong one, but I forgot it."

"I have one, Daddy," said Bunny.

"Where? Give it to me!" called his father quickly. "We must do something at once."

"I don't know where it is," Bunny had to confess. "I was playing with it the other day, but I must have left it somewhere——"

"Never mind, I'll try the lantern again," said Mr. Brown.

"It's sure to blow out," said Uncle Tad.

"Perhaps we can paste something over the hole," suggested Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, Daddy," cried Sue, "take my Teddy bear! Her eyes will give you almost as much light as Bunny's flashlight. Maybe more, 'cause she has *two* eyes. She won't mind the rain, for I can put on her water-proof cloak."

"Hum! That isn't such a bad idea," said Mr. Brown. "We'll try it. Bring out your Sallie Malinda Teddy bear, Sue. Her eyes will certainly need to shine brightly to-night, for it's very dark. It's a good thing you have her along."

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"I'll find my flashlight to-morrow," promised Bunny.

"I'll get one myself then," said his father. "No telling when we might need it."

All this while the big automobile was slowly bumping and moving along. Uncle Tad and Mr. Brown took Sue's Teddy bear. By pressing on a button in the toy's back the eyes shone brightly, two electric lights being behind them.

"Does Sallie Malinda give a good light, Daddy?" asked Sue, as her father got ready to open the door again.

"Yes, little girl. It will be all right, and the wind can't blow out Sallie's eyes, no matter how hard it puffs."

With the Teddy bear as a lantern Mr. Brown again went out. This time the wind did not matter, though it seemed to be blowing harder than ever. Uncle Tad followed Mr. Brown out on the rear steps of the car. They shut the door behind them to keep out the rain.

"Why, it's a regular flood!" cried Uncle Tad, as the Teddy bear's eyes flashed on swirling and muddy water.

"That's what it is," said Daddy Brown. "Say, we've got to do something!" he cried to his uncle. "And we've got to do it soon. We'll have to anchor—tie the auto to a tree or something. This flood may carry us down to the big river just below!"

CHAPTER XII

AT THE FIRE

Holding the Teddy bear so the light from its eyes shone all about, the two men stood on the back steps of the automobile and looked around them.

All about was swiftly running water. The evening before, in coming to a stop for the night, Mr. Brown had noticed, not far away from their camping place, a small stream. Behind it were some high hills or small mountains, but, though the storm was a hard one, no one thought the little brook would turn into such a river.

"But that's what it's done," said Uncle Tad. "It's risen so high that it's covered the side of the road near where we were, and it's floated us off."

"Yes. I fear we'll soon be flooded inside."

Bunny, listening at the outer door of the big car, heard above the noise of the flood and the rain, his father say this. For a moment he was frightened, then he happened to think:

“Well, I’ve got rubber boots, and if the water comes in here I can wade around and get things. But I guess I won’t tell Sue and Momsie about it. They might be scared.”

Bunny Brown was a brave little chap when it came to something like this. In fact he had shown his bravery more than once, as those of you who have read the other books about him and his sister well know.

Out on the steps of the automobile, with the glaring eyes of Sue’s Teddy bear to let them see what was going on, Mr. Brown and Uncle Tad again looked about.

They could see the rain coming down hard, and on both sides of them was what seemed to be a big river of water. Many little brooks in the mountains, joining together, had made such a big stream that it had shoved along the heavy auto.

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"It can't shove us very far, I think," said Mr. Brown. "We are too heavy for that. But it might tip us over, this water might, or send us into a ditch out of which we would have a hard time to climb. I'd like to anchor fast, if I could."

"Why don't you tie fast to a tree?" asked Uncle Tad. "We have the heavy towing rope with us."

"I guess that's a good idea," said Mr. Brown. "We are being swept along the road and there are plenty of trees on either side."

Bunny Brown was not listening at the door any longer. His mother had called him and Sue to the dining-room table and given them some bread and milk to eat. She thought this would take their attention off the trouble they were in. For that there was trouble Mrs. Brown was sure. Otherwise her husband and Uncle Tad would not have stayed so long outside looking about in the wind and the rain.

"Yes," said Mr. Brown, after once more looking about with the aid of the lights from the eyes of Sue's Teddy bear. "We had best try to fasten the auto to some tree. Then we'll be held fast, for I do not believe the flood will reach much higher. I have heard of high water in this part of the country, but it never gets much higher than this, if I remember rightly."

"I'll go in for the rope," said Uncle Tad, "and we'll try to make fast to some tree. We'll be lucky if we can do it before we run into something," and he opened the door.

"Oh, what is the matter?"

"What has happened?"

"Tell us all about it!"

This is what Mrs. Brown, Bunny and Sue said as Uncle Tad, dripping wet, came back into the auto. Dix and Splash thumped their tails on the floor, as though also asking what the matter was.

"Oh, it isn't much," said Uncle Tad. "The brook rose into a river in the night, and tried to carry us away. But we are going to anchor to a tree until morning."

Bunny and Sue could easily understand what this meant, and they were not frightened, even though the automobile swayed about from side to side and bumped as a boat does when it goes over the bottom in shallow water.

Uncle Tad got the towrope out from a box, or locker, as Mr. Brown called it. The rope was a strong one, as it was intended to be used in case the big automobile went into a ditch, in which event it could be pulled out.

With the rope Uncle Tad went out on the back steps again.

"We're still moving," said Mr. Brown.

"Are we any nearer the trees, so it will be easier to catch hold of one of them with a loop of the rope?" asked Uncle Tad.

"No, we're farther off from the trees," said Bunny's father and, if the little boy had been listening, he would have felt worried about this. But Mr. Brown was a good sailor, and if he knew how to anchor, or make fast, a boat in a big ocean, he might be supposed to know how to anchor, or stop, an automobile in a flood on the road.

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Mr. Brown took the rope, while Uncle Tad held the Teddy bear and flashed her eyes about on the flood that was moving the car along. Bunny's father was trying to catch sight of a tree around a limb of which he could cast the rope and so bring the drifting automobile to a stop. It was not moving quite so fast now, as the stream was not quite so swift. In fact if the flooded stream had not been so swift it never could have carried the heavy auto along at all.

"I suppose," said Mr. Brown, "I could start the motor and make the car go itself. But I would not know where to steer her."

"No, it is better to make her fast, I think," said Uncle Tad.

Just then they passed under a tree. Mr. Brown tried to catch the rope to it, but the auto rolled past too quickly.

"Better luck next time," he said.

Presently they were swept under another tree, and this time, as Mr. Brown cast the rope, it whirled about a big limb and was held fast. The other end had been tied to the automobile near the back door and now the big car came to a slow stop.

"If she only holds we'll be all right," said Mr. Brown, his hand still on the rope.

The automobile moved a little bit farther, as the rope stretched, and then it stopped altogether, and Mr. Brown tied tighter the end of the rope that was about the tree.

"Anchored at last!" cried Uncle Tad, as he got ready to go inside the car. "Now let it rain and flood as much as it likes."

"Are we all right?" asked Bunny as his father and his Uncle Tad came in.

"We won't go out to sea, will we?" Sue questioned.

"No indeed, to your question, Sue," answered her father. "And as to yours, Bunny, we are anchored safe and sound I hope. Now we can go back to bed and sleep."

But first Bunny and Sue had to ask many questions, and Sue had to take off her Teddy bear's water-proof cloak, in spite of which the toy was wet.

"But it won't hurt her batteries inside or her eyes," said the little girl.

"And as for her fur, that will soon dry," added Mother Brown.

"She gave us good light," said Father Brown. "Now, off to bed with you."

No one slept very much the rest of the night except the children and the dogs. Dix and Splash did not think of worrying, and as for Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue, they thought that whatever Daddy Brown and Uncle Tad did was just right anyhow. So they had no fear.

Mrs. Brown, her husband, and Uncle Tad did not sleep very soundly, however. The rain still came down in torrents and the wind blew hard. The rush of the flood beneath the auto could still be heard. But it came no higher.

The rope held to the tree, the big car did not drag, and when morning came the travelers found themselves some distance from the place where they had been the evening before. They were about a mile down the road, and all about them, over the road and the adjacent fields, was a lake of water.

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But it was not raining so hard now. The storm seemed to be about over. The water was going down, Mr. Brown said, and when Bunny, at the breakfast table, asked how his father knew, Mr. Brown pointed to a fence not far from the tree to which they were tied.

"Do you see the muddy marks and the bits of leaves and grass caught on the fence?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I see," said Bunny.

"Well, that shows how high the water got," explained his father. "You see the top of the water is below that now, which shows that the flood is going down. And I am glad enough of it."

"So am I," said Mrs. Brown. "We've had water enough for once."

The storm had been such a heavy one that it could not last long, and by noon the sun was out. But it would take some time for the flood to go down and the roads to dry up.

"We'll probably stay here three days," said Mr. Brown. "It looks like a nice place, and we have plenty to eat. We'll stay and let things dry out. Traveling on a muddy, slippery road, with a heavy automobile like this, is not safe. We'll wait a while."

Anything suited Bunny and Sue as long as they were seeing or having something new. And when the rain stopped their mother let them put on their rubber boots and wade where the water was not too deep.

After wading about awhile, Bunny thought of something to do.

"Let's make a raft!" he said to Sue.

"Oh, that will be fun!" she cried.

Sue knew what a raft was from living near the seashore. Many times she and her brother had made them, and they had often heard stories of sailors coming ashore from wrecks on rafts. Rafts are flat boards, or planks, nailed or tied together, and they will float on top of the water and carry a number of people, though they are so low that the water washes over them and wets one's feet.

This last part Bunny and Sue did not mind, for they had on rubber boots. They quickly made a raft by collecting some boards and logs that had come down with the flood, and had caught in the fence corner near which their auto was anchored.

Uncle Tad helped them nail the boards together, and then Bunny and Sue floated the raft over into a little rain-water lake in the middle of a field and began shoving it about with long poles. They had ridden up and down one side of the little lake, stopping at

places on the “shore,” to which they gave the names of sea-coast towns near their home.

“Now we’ll go across to the other side,” said Sue.

But when she and Bunny had the raft about in the middle of the “lake,” it stuck fast, because the water was not deep enough just there.

“Push!” cried Bunny. “Push hard, Sue!”

Sue pushed so hard that, all of a sudden, her pole broke, and she fell off the raft into the water.

“Oh dear!” she cried. “Oh dear!”

For a moment Bunny did not know what to do. Then he saw that the water was not more than up to Sue’s knees and he knew she would not drown. But, as she had fallen in backwards, she was wet from top to toe. Sue began to cry as she got up, choking and gasping, for she had swallowed a little water.

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"Don't cry!" begged Bunny. "Let's pretend you're a swimmer on the beach and went out too far."

"Wha-what good would that do, me pre-pre-tendin' that?" half-sobbed Sue.

"Well, then I'll pretend I'm a life-guard, and I'll swim out and pull you to shore," said Bunny.

By this time Sue had managed to stand up firmly on her feet, though she was very wet.

"There's no use in you're pretending you're a life-guard and getting all wet like me, when I can just as well get on the raft myself," said Sue practically.

"Oh, I want to be a life-guard," said Bunny. "Here I come!" and with that he jumped off the raft feet first, landing near Sue with a splash.

"Oh, now you've got *yourself* all wet, for it went over your boots," said the little girl. "Mother will scold."

"Well, now I can take half the scolding, for I'm half as wet as you," said Bunny. "Anyhow she won't scold much. For you couldn't help falling in, Sue, and she'll be glad I pretended to be a life-guard to help you out." With that he put Sue on the raft again.

By this time the raft had floated free of the little hill of mud in the meadow lake where it had gone aground, and Bunny and Sue poled it toward the road. When their mother saw how wet they were she did not scold them. That is, not much. For, after all, part of it could not be helped.

Dix and Splash enjoyed the flood, for they both liked to be in the water. They swam about, playing their sort of "tag" and racing after sticks which Bunny and Sue threw for them.

A few days after this, when the flood had all gone down, and having waited for the roads to dry, Mr. Brown once more set off with his family in the big machine. For two or three days they traveled along. Once, when they stopped for their noon-day lunch under a big oak tree, Uncle Tad built a small fire of twigs and Bunny and his sister roasted marshmallows at the blaze.

At a number of places Mr. Brown asked about Fred Ward, the missing boy, but no trace of him could be found, nor was anything more heard of the traveling medicine show with the colored banjo player.

It was one evening at dusk, when the automobile had come to a stop for the night, and the family were all sitting out under the tree near the road, that Uncle Tad, looking down the highway, said:



"Isn't that a fire over there?" He pointed toward a neighboring farmhouse.

"Do you mean a campfire or a bonfire?" asked Bunny.

"Neither one. I mean a real fire," said Uncle Tad.

"It is a fire!" suddenly cried Mr. Brown. "A shed near that barn is blazing. See the men running to put it out!"

"We'd better go to help," said Uncle Tad.

"Let us come, too!" begged Bunny and Sue.

CHAPTER XIII

DIX AND THE CAT

Uncle Tad and Mr. Brown did not stop to answer the children's plea to be allowed to go to the fire. On the men rushed, and Bunny and Sue turned to their mother.

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"Please mayn't we go?" they begged. "It isn't far, and it's early yet. Besides, we know enough to keep away from fires."

"Well——" said Mrs. Brown slowly. Then she stopped as she saw Uncle Tad running back, while Mr. Brown kept on toward the blaze in a shed near some farmer's barn.

"What's the matter, Uncle Tad?" asked Bunny. "Aren't you going?"

"Yes. But I came back to get the fire extinguishers that we carry on the auto. This blaze hasn't much of a start yet, and we may be able to put it out with our extinguishers."

Uncle Tad darted into the automobile. Sue and Bunny remembered about the extinguishers now. They were red things, like fire crackers, and hung near the seat behind the steering wheel.

Once, to show Bunny and Sue how easily the extinguishers put out a fire, Mr. Brown had started one in the back yard. Then, from the red thing, he had squirted a liquid and the fire sizzled and went out.

"Oh, we want to see daddy put out the fire!" cried Bunny.

"The children are teasing to go," said Mrs. Brown, as Uncle Tad came out again with an extinguisher under each arm. "Do you suppose it would do them any harm?"

"Not at all!" cried Uncle Tad. "But you come with them. I don't believe the fire will be a very big one, but a lot of the country people are running to it. Bring the children along. Daddy Brown won't care."

"Whoop!" cried Bunny. "That's great!"

"I wouldn't whoop," observed Sue, shaking her finger at her brother.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because this isn't a bonfire. Somebody's shed is burning up; and though it looks nice it isn't any fun for them. We ought to be sorry."

"Well I am," said Bunny. "I'm sorry for them, but I'm glad for myself that I'm going to see the fire. Is that all right, Momsie?"

"I guess so," answered Mrs. Brown, and then she hurried on to the fire with the children, while Uncle Tad raced ahead with the red fire-cracker extinguishers.

Over the fields, from other farmhouses, people came running. Men and women, and boys and girls. They, also, wanted to see the fire. As Bunny and Sue, with their mother,

hurried on they saw that the blaze was in a low shed, and from this shed came wild squeals.

"They sound like pigs!" said Bunny.

"I guess it is the pig-pen on fire," replied Mother Brown.

Bunny and his sister, with their mother, were at the fire almost as soon as Daddy Brown and Uncle Tad. Then they saw for sure that what was blazing was a big pig-pen built on the side of a barn. The barn had not yet caught fire.

"Make a bucket brigade!" called one of the farmers who had run to the fire. "We must dip water from the brook, pass it along in pails, and throw it on the fire."

"Wait a minute!" cried Mr. Brown. "I have a better way than that, and surer, I think. First some of you rip out a side of the pen, so the pigs can get loose, and then we'll put out the fire for you."

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"That's the idea! He's got fire extinguishers!" cried the farmer whose pen was ablaze. "Rip off some of the boards and let those pigs out. Otherwise they'll be roasted before their time."

"Set to work!" yelled a neighbor.

With rakes, hoes and axes the men soon tore down a side of the pen farthest away from the fire. Out ran the pigs squealing as loudly as they could. Dix, Splash and some other dogs ran among them, thinking it was all a game, I suppose.

Mr. Brown, with one extinguisher, and Uncle Tad, with another, squirted on the blaze the white streams, made of something that puts fire out better even than water. Over the blaze Uncle Tad and Mr. Brown squirted the stuff until finally the fire was out.

"Well, I'm certainly obliged to you, neighbor," said the farmer who owned the pigs. "My name's Blakeson. I don't believe I know you, though. Live around here?"

"No, we are making a tour in a big automobile," and Mr. Brown pointed to it. "We saw your blaze and came to it."

"Well, I'm certainly thankful to you, and for those contraptions there," and he pointed to the fire extinguishers. "That's better than dipping water from the brook."

"Yes, I carry them in case the gasolene on my auto should get on fire," said Mr. Brown. "But they'll put out any small blaze."

The pig-pen had only partly burned, and the barn, to the side of which it was built, was only scorched. Some one must have dropped a match in the straw of the pig-pen to start the blaze, it was said.

"Well, we'll nail a few boards back on the pen, and it will do to keep the pigs in until morning," said Mr. Blakeson, the farmer. "That is if we can get 'em collected again."

"My dogs will help," said Mr. Brown. "Here, Dix! Splash!" he called. "Drive the pigs up here!"

The two dogs, both of which were used to driving cows, soon collected the pigs, even in the dark, and once more they were in their pen, sniffing about for something to eat, now that the fire was out.

The farmer whose barn had been saved by the children's father was much interested in the big auto, and, a little later in the evening, went down to look at it, as did some of his neighbors.

“Well, that’s a fine way of traveling about,” said Mr. Blakeson, and his friends agreed with him.

The next morning, while Bunny, Sue and the others were at breakfast, talking about the fire of the night before, a number of children came down the road to see the big machine. All the dirt from the flood had been washed off, and as it had been newly painted before this tour started, the “Ark,” as the Browns sometimes called their big car, looked very nice indeed.

The country children had seldom, if ever, seen so big an automobile as this, nor one in which a family could live as they traveled. There were many “Ohs!” and “Ahs!” as they walked about it.

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"Let's ask 'em in and show 'em our bunks," proposed Bunny, and his mother said he might. The children were even more surprised at the inside of the "Ark" than at the outside.

"Oh, wouldn't I love to live in this!" sighed a little girl with red hair. "It's just like Mother Goose or a fairy story."

"I love fairy stories," said Sue.

Just before the Browns were ready to set off once more in their automobile, a hired hand from the Blakeson farm came down with a basket of fresh eggs, some apples and other fruit which the farmer gave Daddy Brown and Uncle Tad for helping to put out the fire.

"Oh, he needn't have done that," said Mrs. Brown. "But I do love fresh eggs, so I'll keep them. Please thank Mr. Blakeson for me."

The man said he would, and then, as he went back to the farm, the big auto started off on the tour again. There were yet many miles to go, and many more adventures were in store for Bunny Brown and his sister Sue.

"We've got to find that missing Fred Ward," said Bunny. "It's funny where he went, isn't it?"

"Well, this country is a big place, especially if a person wants to hide," said Mr. Brown. "Still we may find some trace of Fred in Portland when we get there. But that will not be for some weeks, as we are traveling slowly."

The Browns and Uncle Tad found the auto tour so pleasant that it was decided to make the trip even longer than at first planned, which would put off the time when they would reach Portland.

For two more days they traveled on, stopping each night near some village or small city. Nothing happened except that once they nearly ran into a hay wagon that did not get out of the way in time.

"But it wouldn't hurt any more to hit a hay wagon than it would be to fall into a feather bed," said Bunny.

It was just about supper time. Bunny and Sue were playing out in front of the automobile, while Mrs. Brown was getting supper. Sue suddenly called:

"Oh, look at Dix! He's chasing a cat!"

Something big and gray flashed over the ground. Dix ran for it, and his teeth seemed to close on one of the hind legs of the animal. Then the gray animal ran up a tree, and Dix raced about at the foot, barking and whining, while Splash left the place where he was rolling on the grass, to come to see what the matter was.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MEDICINE SHOW

Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue ran toward the tree up which Dix had chased the gray creature. The dog was greatly excited, and at once Splash joined in, too. Though it is very likely Splash did not in the least know what he was barking at.

Dogs are like that, you know. When one hears another bark it will join in, and then will come a third and maybe a fourth until every dog in the block is barking, and only the first one may know why, and perhaps even he does not.

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"Oh, I hope he didn't hurt that pussy," said Sue.

"Maybe it wasn't a pussy," suggested Bunny.

"What makes you say that?" demanded Sue. "Didn't you see something gray run across the grass, and didn't Dix run after it?"

"Yes. And the gray thing ran up a tree. But maybe it wasn't a kittie," said Bunny, shaking his head to show he did not agree with his sister.

"Let's go and see what it is," said she, and together the two hurried faster than ever toward the tree at the bottom of which Dix and Splash were having a great barking time.

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Just over to this tree," answered Bunny, pointing to it.

"Well, don't go any farther than that," warned his mother.

"No, we're just going to see what it was Dix chased up into it," went on Sue. "I said it was a cat but Bunny says——"

"I don't say what it is yet!" interrupted her brother. "I want to see it first."

They reached the tree, and the two dogs were so interested in looking up and barking at something in it that they paid little attention to the children. Dix actually stepped on Sue's feet and nearly made her fall down, while Splash tried to jump over Bunny's head. But the dog did not quite do it, and fell on Bunny instead, knocking him down.

"Oh, Bunny, are you hurt?" cried Sue.

"No, I guess not—much," answered Bunny slowly. "But I'm all—mussed up!" and he looked at Splash, who was again rushing toward the boy, not so much with the idea of playing with him as of getting nearer to the tree so he could bark at the gray animal.

"Down, Splash! Down!" cried Bunny sharply, and the dogs at once stopped barking. They had learned to mind the little boy.

Both dogs looked up into the tree and whined. It was just the way dogs do who are in the habit of chasing cats, and who make this noise, perhaps to show how sorry they are that they cannot get at the poor pussies to roll them over in the grass.

But Dix and Splash were not what one could call cat-chasing dogs. True, they had done it when they were small dogs, just over being puppies, but, of late years, Splash had

given up that fun, and what little the children had seen of Dix they had not noticed him chasing cats.

“That’s what makes me think it isn’t a cat they’ve got up that tree now,” said Bunny, speaking of cat-chasing to his sister.

“But it *looked* like a cat,” said she.

The dogs were quieter now, though they both kept on peering up into the tree and whining softly, though they did not jump about so hard and try to leap over Bunny and Sue.

“Oh, I see it!” suddenly exclaimed Sue.

“See what?” asked Bunny.

“The cat—the gray thing—whatever it was ran up the tree,” and Sue pointed her finger to the crotch where one of the lowest big branches joined the trunk.

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"There it is!" went on the little girl. "See it, Bunny? And it is gray. But it doesn't really *look* like a cat."

Bunny came and stood beside Sue. He could see the gray animal now, and as it moved just then, the dogs set up another wild barking.

"Be still!" ordered Bunny. Then, as the dog's cries were less noisy he said: "Why, Sue, I know what that is. It's a——"

And just then the gray animal fell out of the tree, landing on a pile of leaves at the very feet of the children.

With barks and howls the two dogs made a dive for it. I do not really believe they meant to bite it—they just wanted to see what it was. But Bunny was too quick for them.

With a sudden motion he caught up the gray animal and held it close to him. At the same time he shouted:

"Down, Splash! Down, Dix! Don't dare try to get this poor little squirrel. One of you has hurt its leg anyhow—that's why it fell out of the tree."

"Oh, Bunny! Is it really and truly a squirrel?" asked Sue, excitedly.

"That's what it is," said her brother. "It's a big gray squirrel. It does look something like a cat, but its tail is bigger than a cat's except when a cat is being chased by a dog."

"I saw the big tail," explained Sue, "and that's why I thought maybe it was a cat. A cat's tail always swells up like a long balloon whenever it sees a dog. But is the squirrel hurt, Bunny?"

"I guess Dix must have bit it a little on one leg," said the boy, as he looked at the gray animal which did not try to get away or bite. "That's why it couldn't go up any higher in the tree or hold fast any longer. Its leg is hurt. I'm going to take it to Uncle Tad. He knows how to fix hurt animals."

Bunny could feel the heart of the frightened squirrel beating very hard, and the little animal seemed to shrink closer to the boy, as though it knew it would be taken care of. Dix and Splash bounded about, now and then leaping up against Bunny as though they wanted to get the squirrel away from him.

But Bunny stood firm, and cried "Down, sir!" in such sharp tones that the dogs knew they must mind. They gave up the hope of getting the squirrel (that is, if they knew it was such an animal) and ran off to have a game of "tag" together.



“Dix knew it wasn’t a cat as soon as he saw it,” explained Bunny to Sue as they walked back toward the big auto, Bunny carrying the injured squirrel, one of whose legs seemed broken. “Dix knew it was a wild animal,” went on the little boy, “and that’s why he chased it.”

“I’m glad he didn’t get it,” murmured Sue, softly.

“So am I,” replied her brother. “We’ll get Uncle Tad to fix the sore leg, and then we’ll make a cage and keep the squirrel. Some day we may get up another circus, and we could have it do tricks.”

“Don’t you think the squirrel would rather be in the woods?” asked Sue, as she looked at the gray creature.

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"Well, maybe yes," agreed Bunny. "After we have it in the circus a while we'll let it go. 'Member how we played circus, Sue?"

"I guess I do! We had lots of fun, didn't we?"

"We did!"

From across the fields came a call:

"Come to supper, children!"

"We're coming, Momsie!" shouted Bunny.

"And we're bringing a squirrel to supper too!" added Sue, who always liked to be counted in on everything.

"A squirrel!" exclaimed Uncle Tad when he saw the gray creature that had fallen out of the tree. "Where did you get it?"

The children told what had happened, and Uncle Tad looked at the squirrel's leg.

"Can you fix it, or make him a new wooden leg?" asked Sue.

Uncle Tad looked the squirrel over carefully. The woodland animal did not seem to mind being handled. It seemed to know it was in the hands of friends, and safe from the barking dogs. And though wild squirrels quickly bite one who manages to catch them alive in the woods, this one did not offer to nip the hands of the children or of Uncle Tad.

"Yes," said Uncle Tad after a bit, "I think I can mend this squirrel's leg. It doesn't seem to be broken, only strained and bruised. I guess Dix didn't bite it very hard. I'll make some splints, or little sticks, to put on, so the squirrel can't move his leg, and I'll bandage it. Then it will get well quicker."

A little box, filled with straw and soft rags, was made as a home for the squirrel after Uncle Tad had bound up its leg. Then Bunny and Sue finally went to supper, after having been called several times. And even then they could not leave the little squirrel, but ran back every now and then to look at it, as it curled up on the soft bed. Over the box was put a wire cover so the squirrel could not get out and so Dix or Splash could not get at it.

"What are we going to give the squirrel to eat?" asked Bunny, when he had finished his supper. "He's got to have something to eat."

"And he's got to have a name," added Sue. "We can't call him just 'squirrel' for we may get another."

“Call him Fluffy,” suggested Mother Brown. “His tail is so soft and fluffs out so beautifully.”

“Fluffy is a good name,” decided Bunny, and Sue said the same thing.

“But what about giving him something to eat?” asked Bunny.

“Bread soaked in milk will do for to-night,” said Uncle Tad. “Afterward we’ll try to find him some nuts, though it’s a little early. Still he’ll eat seeds and grain.”

Bunny and Sue took a last look at Fluffy, the squirrel, before they went to their bunks that night. Dix and Splash were called in and shown the squirrel in his little nest. Then Mr. Brown told both dogs sharply and solemnly that they must not bother the gray, woodland creature. Dix and Splash understood, I think, for they were smart dogs.

Both children were up early the next morning to see their new pet, and they fed Fluffy some dried crackers. At first the squirrel was a bit timid, but it soon poked its sharp nose and mouth out of a little opening on the side of the wire netting over the box and ate from the hands of Bunny and Sue.

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"Don't let him bite you," said Mother Brown, as she started to get breakfast.

"Oh, Fluffy won't bite," said Bunny. "He's as tame as our cat used to be."

Once more the automobile traveled on. It rained part of the day but the shower was not a hard one, though Bunny and Sue had to stay in the big car when noon came, and dinner could not be served out-of-doors.

But the skies cleared before night, and when the auto was stopped the children could run about with their rubbers on. They were near a small town, and Mrs. Brown promised to take the children in after the meal to see if they could buy some grain or seeds for Fluffy.

The supper was an early one, and, leaving Uncle Tad at the "Ark" with the two dogs and the squirrel, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, with the two children walked into town. As they reached the middle of the village, near a public square, they heard the sound of music and saw a crowd of people around a wagon lighted by a gasolene torch, such as is used in a circus at night.

"Oh, it's a medicine show!" cried Mrs. Brown, as she saw a big, long-haired man on the back platform of a wagon, holding up a bottle about which he was talking to the people.

"Yes, and there's a banjo player with him," said Bunny. "Look, Mother! It's a colored boy playing a banjo! Maybe it's Fred Ward!"

CHAPTER XV

WAS IT FRED?

"What's this? What's this you're talking about?" suddenly asked Mr. Brown, as he heard what Bunny said. Or rather, Bunny's father did not hear exactly, for he had been thinking about something else. But he had caught the name Fred Ward.

"Bunny thinks that colored banjo player with that medicine show may be Fred Ward," said Mrs. Brown. "Do you think it would be of any use to inquire, Daddy?"

"Why, that *is* a medicine show, isn't it!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, as though he saw it for the first time. "And it's just like the one we heard about that had a boy banjo player with it."

"There's a boy banjo player now," said Bunny. "He's going to play, Daddy, too! Do you think it could be Fred?"

The man who was selling the bottles of medicine, after telling the people how much good it would do them, had stopped to let the boy traveling with him play the banjo.

There are, or there used to be, many such traveling medicine shows. Sometimes there would be a whole troop of Indians, some real and some make-believe, that would be engaged by the seller of the medicine. He would have the Indians do some of their queer dances and then, when a crowd had collected, he would sell some medicine—maybe some he said the Indians made themselves.

Another medicine seller would go about with a gaily painted wagon, carrying a cornet player, a singer or a banjoist to attract a crowd. And when the men and women were gathered about the end of the wagon, which had a broad platform on the end and a flaring gasolene torch at night, the man would tell about his medicine and sell all he could.

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This traveling medicine show which Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue saw was like those. And, just as the Browns reached the place in the village square where the torch on the wagon was burning, the man had finished selling a large number of bottles of medicine. It was about time he amused the crowd again, he thought. So he called in a loud voice:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, while I am getting out of my storeroom some more bottles of my wonderful medicine that will cure all your pains and aches, I will have my friend here, Professor Rombodno Prosono entertain you on his magical banjo. Professor Rombodno Prosono, I might say, is the most wonderful player on the banjo you have ever heard. He has traveled all over the world and played in every country. Professor, you will now oblige!"

Of course what the medicine man said about the banjo player was only a joke, and the people knew that. He was not a professor at all. But he was a good banjo player and a singer, and Bunny and Sue were delighted with the music. The songs, too, were funny.

"He sings like a real colored boy," said Sue.

"Maybe he is," her father observed.

"Yes, and maybe he's only blacked up, like most of them," suggested Mrs. Brown. "Can you tell if he looks anything like Fred Ward, Daddy?"

"No, I can't be sure that he does," said Mr. Brown. "I never saw much of the missing boy, you know; and I certainly would not know him if he were blackened like a negro. This one, if he is not really colored, is well made-up. He would fool almost any one."

"Is there any way we could find out?" asked Mrs. Brown. "We ought to do all we can to find Fred for his parents."

"I'll see what I can do after the exhibition is over," promised Mr. Brown. "I'll ask the proprietor of the medicine wagon if I can get a chance. But I'll have to do it when the banjo player can't hear, for in case he should be Fred—which I hardly think can be true—but if it should be he, and he heard me asking, he'd run away again."

"Yes, I suppose he would," said Mrs. Brown with a sigh. "Oh, how foolish boys are sometimes. They don't know what is good for them," and she looked at Bunny, as if wondering if the time would ever come when he would not be a "mother's boy." She hoped not.

"Let's get up as close as we can," said Bunny. "Maybe if it's Fred we can tell, no matter if he is blacked up like a minstrel."

“He doesn’t look at all like Fred to me,” said Sue. “He looks so funny with his big red lips and his white collar.”

“That’s the way they all dress,” said Bunny. “Come on, here’s a place we can squeeze through and see better.”

Bunny wiggled his way up among the people. His sister followed him, and Mr. and Mrs. Brown, watching the children, knew where to find them when they wanted to go away.

“Now take a good look,” whispered Sue to Bunny, as they got very near the platform on which the boy sat. She had made her whisper rather loud, and it came at just the time when the banjoist stopped playing, so that he and several persons heard the little girl.

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"What's the matter?" asked one man, smiling down at Sue. "Didn't you ever see a minstrel before?"

"Yes, I did," said Sue. "But maybe not this one."

"Oh, they're all alike," said the man, but Sue paid no more attention to him, for she was nudging Bunny and trying to get him to look at the colored boy.

Bunny himself was greatly interested. He wanted to make sure whether or not the player were Fred. So he stared with all his might at the banjoist, who just then began another song.

By this time the medicine man had come out on the platform of his wagon with more filled bottles to sell. He would begin as soon as the song was finished, for more people had gathered, attracted by the music.

And then Bunny and Sue both noticed that the colored boy was looking straight at them. But he did not seem to know them. And surely, if it had been Fred Ward he would have known the Brown children, even though he had lived next door to them only a short time. People did not easily forget Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue, once they had met them.

But this banjo player evidently did not know them; or, if he did, he was not going to let it be known. He finished his song with a twang of the banjo strings and then hurried inside the wagon, the sides of which were of wood, like a small moving van.

Then the man began selling his medicine again, talking a great deal about it while he did so.

Mrs. Brown turned to her husband and said:

"I'm sure that was a white boy blacked up to look like a negro, and he does it very well, too. Even his voice is like a colored person's. But as he turned to go back into the wagon his sleeve slipped up and I saw that his arm was white."

"Very likely he was made up as a colored boy then," said Mr. Brown. "His lips were too red for a real colored boy's."

"Well, since we are sure of that let's ask the medicine man about him," went on Mrs. Brown.

"All right, I'm willing," said Mr. Brown good-naturedly. "We'll wait until the show is over though."

The medicine man kept on selling bottles. It was getting later now, and the crowd began to thin out. Seeing this the medicine man announced there would be no more music or sales that night, but that he would stop in this town on his next trip.

The flaring lamp was put out, and the medicine man began to close up his wagon for the night. Mr. Brown stepped up to him. The real or pretended colored boy was not in sight.

"I'd like to ask you a question," said Mr. Brown to the traveling medicine seller.

"About my wonderful pain destroyer?" asked "Dr. Perry," as he called himself.

"No. About that young banjo player you have with you."

"Oh, you mean Professor Rombodno Prosono?"

"Yes," and Mr. Brown smiled. "I want to know if he is Fred Ward, who has run away from his home next door to us?"

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[Illustration: "NOW TAKE A GOOD LOOK," WHISPERED SUE TO BUNNY. *Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on an Auto Tour. Page 153.*]

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE DITCH

For a few seconds the medicine man looked sharply at Mr. Brown. He did not appear to understand what the children's father had asked. Then, finally, Dr. Perry asked:

"Is it a joke you are making?"

"No, indeed. I'm serious," said Mr. Brown. "We are looking for a lost boy, or rather, a runaway boy, named Fred Ward. The Wards live next door to us, and when we started on this trip, which is not yet finished, the boy's parents said they would be glad if we would try to find him and send him——"

"Tell us, please," broke in Bunny, unable to wait any longer for the question he wanted answered. "Tell us if your banjo player is really colored?"

"Oh yes, he's really *colored* all right," said the medicine man, "but not by Mother Nature."

"What's that mean?" asked Sue.

"That means, little girl," said Dr. Perry as he put away the unsold bottles of his medicine, "that my banjo player blackens his face and hands himself, and reddens his lips, to make him look like a negro."

"Can you tell us who he really is?"

"No, I am sorry to say I can not," said Dr. Perry, and he bowed respectfully to Mrs. Brown, who had asked the question. "But I'll let you ask him yourself. He usually goes in back there," and he nodded toward his wagon, "to wash the black off after the show each night. No doubt he is in there now scrubbing himself, for I must say he is a very clean person, is John Lane."

"John Lane! Is that what he calls himself?" asked Mr. Brown.

"He has since he has been with me, which, however, is only the last few days. I called him professor just for fun, as it sounds better with the public. But I'll let you ask him yourself. He must be through washing by now. It may be he is a runaway boy. It wouldn't be the first time I've had 'em join me. Sometimes they get sorry and run back

home again, and sometimes they drift away and I don't see 'em again. But we'll soon find out if this is the boy you want."

He opened a door leading off the back platform. It seemed to give admittance to the middle of the medicine van.

"Here you, John! John Lane!" called Dr. Perry. "There are some folks out here who want to see you. They want to see how you look when you have the black off. You ought to be washed now, for it's almost time to go to the hotel for the night. Come on out."

There was no answer to the medicine man's call. He stepped inside the wagon, called again, and then, lighting a lamp, which stood in a bracket, looked around inside the van.

"John seems to have gone," the medicine man said. "I guess he finished washing off the black, and then slipped out the front way to go to the hotel. He did that once before, without waiting for me to count up my money and come along. You see I travel only by day, putting up the horse, that draws my van, at a hotel stable each night.

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"Then John, or whomever I have with me to make the music to draw a crowd, and I, go to the hotel to stay all night. In the morning, after breakfast, we start out again. Sometimes, in a big city I stay a week, selling in different places.

"But that boy, whoever he is, has gone. I can see where he's been washing the black off, and, not wanting to wait when he saw I was talking to you folks, I guess he just slipped away. John is a bashful boy."

"Do you know anything about him?" asked Mr. Brown. "Where did he come from, and where is he going? Did he give any account of himself?"

"Not much, except that he came to me the other day just after my violin player left me. I had to have somebody musical to draw the crowd, and he surely can play the banjo.

"So I hired him. He said his name was Lane and that he had to make his own way in the world. Said he wanted to be a player in a theater.

"I told him my place was a sort of open-air theater and ought to suit him," said Dr. Perry with a smile, "and he said he thought he would like it. So I engaged him and he did very well. You are the first persons that have inquired about him."

"We are not sure he *is* the runaway Fred we are looking for," said Mr. Brown. "It is hard to tell with all that black he had on. But I should like to meet him."

"Go to the hotel any time between now and morning," suggested the medicine man. "I guess the boy will be glad to talk to you."

"I'll see him in the morning," said Bunny's father. "I'd like to get this boy to go home, if he is really Fred Ward. His mother and father miss him very much."

"I'll do all I can for you," promised the medicine man. "Come to the hotel in the morning and I'll let you talk to him. I won't say anything in the meanwhile, because if he is really Fred, and has run off as you say, he won't want to meet you or go back with you. It's best to take him unawares."

Mr. Brown agreed to this, and then, with his wife and Bunny and Sue, started for the "Ark." On the way they discussed what had happened. They saw the medicine man, as they turned down the curve in the road, driving his horse and van toward the hotel.

"I'm sure it's Fred," said Sue.

"So am I," added Bunny. "Won't it be *great* if we find him so soon?"

"It may not be the missing boy," said Mr. Brown. "But we'll know in the morning."

Those in the “Ark” passed a quiet night, though they went to bed later than usual because of the excitement of the evening. Uncle Tad was interested in hearing the news about the blackened-up banjo player who might prove to be Fred Ward.

“And how’s Fluffy, our squirrel?” asked Sue.

“Fast asleep, just as Dix and Splash are,” answered Uncle Tad.

Bunny and Sue were awake early the next morning, but Daddy Brown was ahead of them, and their mother said he had gone on to the hotel to see about the banjo boy.

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"May we go there after we have eaten?" asked Bunny. "We want to see Fred."

"It might not be he," said Mrs. Brown. "You had better wait until your father comes back."

At first Bunny and Sue fretted a bit, but finally they became interested in playing games under the big tree where the "Ark" had rested for the night, and before they knew it their father came back.

"But he hasn't brought Fred!" cried Bunny.

"Maybe the minstrel boy wasn't the one after all," suggested Mrs. Brown.

"Well, I'm inclined to think he was," said her husband.

"Did you see him?" eagerly asked Bunny.

"No, he had run away. That's why I think it was Fred."

Then Mr. Brown explained:

"When I got to the hotel," he told Bunny, Sue and the others, "I saw Dr. Perry walking around rather nervously. I asked him about the boy, and he said that when he and his medicine van reached the hotel after closing the show last night, he found that his banjo player had packed his valise, taken his banjo, and gone off."

"Where?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Nobody knows. He left no word. That's what makes me think it was Fred. He must have seen us in the crowd. And, as soon as he could wash the black off his face, he hurried to the hotel ahead of Dr. Perry, got his bag and ran away. Very likely he did not want to see us and hear us give him the message from his parents. His heart must still be hard against them. It is too bad, if that was Fred, for I had begun to think I had found him. Still it may have been some other young fellow. Dr. Perry said they often came and went without giving any reasons. But we'll still be on the lookout for the missing boy."

Once more the "Ark" started off, and for several days there was just ordinary travel. The children played and had fun, the dogs raced along the road, barking and enjoying themselves, and the weather was fine. Then came another day of hard rain, and the "Ark" was kept under a big oak tree.

The day after the rain, when the wayside brooks were still high, but the roads fairly good, Mr. Brown went on again. They were coming to a small town, and had to cross a

ditch over which was a small bridge. Usually there was but little water in the ditch, but now, because of the rain, the banks were full.

“I hope this bridge is strong enough for our car to go over,” said Mr. Brown. Slowly he steered the big machine on it. Hardly had it reached the middle when there was a cracking of wood, and the bridge bent down. The automobile sank with it.

“Oh!” cried Bunny, who sat in the back door. “We’re going into the ditch, Daddy!”

“We’re there *now!*” said Sue as the “Ark” stopped with a jerk and a bounce.

CHAPTER XVII

ON TO PORTLAND

There was no doubt about it, the big automobile was in the ditch. Or rather, the rear wheels, having gone through the small bridge, were now in the water of a little brook. The rains had made the usually dry ditch into a brook that flowed swiftly along.

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"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Brown. "This is too bad!"

"Anybody hurt back there?" asked Mr. Brown, who, at the first feeling that something was wrong, had put on the brakes. The automobile would have stopped anyhow, as the wheels were held fast in the mud and the broken pieces of the bridge.

"No, we're all right," answered Uncle Tad, looking at Bunny and Sue, who, at the first sound of something wrong had crept closer to their mother.

"My nose feels as if I had bumped it," said Bunny, rubbing his "smeller" as he sometimes called it. "Though I don't remember doing it," he went on.

"I guess you did it when you jumped out of your seat," said his mother. "We all jumped, it came so suddenly."

"And I dropped my Teddy bear and Uncle Tad stepped on her," murmured Sue with sorrow in her tones. "Look, Uncle Tad, you've turned on her eyes!"

And, surely enough, the electric eyes of Sallie Malinda were glowing brightly. Uncle Tad must have stepped on the switch button in the toy's back and turned it on.

"But I guess she's all right," went on Sue, as she turned off the switch and then turned it on again to see that it was working as it should. "You didn't hurt her, Uncle Tad," she said.

"I'm glad of that, Sue," said the old soldier. "Now I guess I'd better get around to see if I can help your father get the automobile out of the ditch."

Dix and Splash, who had been racing up and down the road, came back, panting and with their long red tongues hanging out of their mouths, to see what the trouble was. They looked at the ditched automobile with their heads on one side, and then sort of barked at one another. It was as if Dix said:

"Well, what do you think about it, Splash? Do you think we had better stay here and help them?"

"Oh, I don't see anything we can do," answered Splash. At least it *seemed* as if he spoke that way. "Let's keep on playing tag."

And so the two dogs raced away.

"We do seem to be in a fix," remarked Mr. Brown as he came as near as he could to the back of the automobile without getting into the ditch.

"What *can* we do?" asked Mrs. Brown, and her voice was anxious.

“We’ll soon see,” answered her husband. “In the first place you had all better get out of the car. I don’t know how long it may stand upright. It may topple over if the water washes away more mud from under one wheel than from under another, and you’ll be better out than in.”

“But how are we going to *get* out?” asked Bunny. “The back steps are all under water!”

And so they were. When the bridge broke with the automobile the front wheels were off the wooden planks and on the road beyond, and the rear wheels went down when the bridge broke in the middle. So the “Ark” was standing as though it had come to a sudden stop going up a steep hill, at the bottom of which was a brook. The rear wheels, and all but the top one of the back steps were under water.

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"You can crawl out over the front seat," said Mr. Brown. "From there you can easily get down to the ground if Uncle Tad and I help you. Then, Mother, you might try your hand at getting a lunch, for it will soon be noon, while Uncle Tad and I see what we can do about getting the automobile out of the ditch."

"It will be some fun after all," said Bunny as he crawled out over the front seat. "We can picnic alongside the road, Sue, and watch Daddy and Uncle Tad get the car out."

"Yes," said Bunny's sister. "And maybe I'll make a pie for you and Sallie Malinda."

"No, I guess I wouldn't try a pie to-day," said Mrs. Brown with a smile. "We won't be able to use any stove except the small oil one, out on the ground, and that will cook only a few things. We'll wait for the pie until the auto is safe on the road again."

"I hope we can get it out of the ditch without breaking anything," said Mr. Brown, as he helped his wife and children down the high front steps of the big car, and then lifted out the oil stove, and other things that would be needed for the lunch.

"Do you think there is any danger?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"A little," answered her husband. "But at least none of us can be hurt, and the worst that can happen will be a little damage to our car."

"Oh, the dear old 'Ark!'" cried Mrs. Brown. "I hope it won't be damaged much."

"So do I," said her husband. "If I had known that bridge was so weak as to let us fall through I would have gone a different road. But I suppose the rain and high water weakened the supports. However, don't worry. We'll see what can be done."

After a look at the way in which the rear wheels of the big car were lodged in the ditch, Uncle Tad and Mr. Brown went to the nearest town on foot to get help. Mrs. Brown, Bunny and Sue made a little camp beside the road, the children helping a little, and then running about to play. The two dogs joined them in their fun.

"I guess I'll make a little cornstarch pudding," said Mrs. Brown, as she got the other things ready for lunch; and when the pudding was finished she covered it up, so no ants or bugs would get in it, and set it in a hollow stump to keep until it would be needed for the dessert after the lunch.

It was not long before Mr. Brown and Uncle Tad came back riding in a big automobile truck which they had hired at the nearest garage to pull the "Ark" out of the ditch.

"Will you have lunch first?" asked Mrs. Brown.

“Yes, I guess we will,” said her husband. “We’ll eat while the garage men are getting ropes and chains around our car to pull it out of the ditch.”

And so they ate their dinner under the shade of a big tree beside the road. Two men had come in the auto truck to work for Mr. Brown, and they went about it quickly, putting strong ropes and chains on the “Ark.”

“And now I have a little surprise for you,” said Mrs. Brown as she poured tea for herself, Mr. Brown and Uncle Tad, and set milk before the children.

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"Oh, goodie!" cried Sue.

"Fine!" exclaimed Bunny.

Mrs. Brown went to the hollow stump. She looked in and then she cried:

"Oh, dear! No I haven't any either."

"Any what, either?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Surprise for you. I made a nice cocoanut cornstarch pudding, and put it in this hollow stump, covering it up. But something has come along and eaten it."

For a moment there was a silence, and then Bunny cried:

"Maybe it was a hungry bear!"

"Or maybe it was our squirrel Fluffy," said Sue. "He can hop around a little now, 'cause his leg is almost well."

"Hum, the pudding's gone, is it?" said Mr. Brown. "That's too bad. Come here, sir!" he suddenly called to Splash. The dog, who was lying beside Dix near the brook, arose slowly and came to Mr. Brown, tail between his legs and head drooping.

"And you too, Dix! Come here!" ordered Mr. Brown.

Dix walked up exactly as Splash had done, with drooping head and tail. Mr. Brown took hold of the head of first one dog and then the other. He looked closely at their mouths.

"Here we have the pudding thieves!" he cried. "Splash and Dix found the dessert in the hollow stump and ate it. Didn't you, you rascals?"

The dogs whined and said not a "word." It was very plain that they had taken the pudding.

"Oh, please don't whip them, Daddy!" begged Bunny.

"No; I won't," said Mr. Brown.

"I shouldn't have left the pudding where they could get it," said Mrs. Brown. "It was all my fault. I'll make another for supper."

However, there were some cakes in a tin can in the "Ark," and as Uncle Tad climbed in and got them out for the children before the garage men started to pull the stalled automobile out with their machine, Bunny and Sue had a little dessert after all.

"We're all ready to try to get your car out of the ditch now, Mr. Brown," said one of the garage men.

"Oh, let's watch, Sue!" cried Bunny.

"But keep out of the way," ordered their father.

There was a puffing of the other auto truck, a grinding of the wheels, and then the "Ark" was pulled slowly out of the ditch, and on to the road again, the hind wheels running on long planks which the men put under them. Thus out on to the safe and solid road rolled the "Ark."

"Hurrah!" cried Bunny Brown.

"Now we're all right," said his Sister Sue.

And indeed they were, for it was found that nothing was broken on the big machine in which the Brown family were making their tour.

Mr. Brown paid the garage men, who went back to their shop, and the "Ark" was soon on its way again.

"And the next time I come to a small bridge I'm going to find out how much weight it will carry before I cross it," said the children's father.

For a week or more the "Ark" traveled on. Every time he got a chance Mr. Brown asked about Fred, in the different towns through which they passed, but could get no trace of the missing boy.

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They saw other medicine showmen who had with them players or singers, but none of them were at all like the runaway Fred.

"It must have been he who was with Dr. Perry," said Mrs. Brown.

"Yes, and I presume he feared we knew him and so he ran on farther," her husband added. "He may be in Portland now."

"How soon shall we be there?" asked Bunny.

"In a few more days now."

Two days later, as they camped outside a little village for the night, they saw beside the road a signboard which read:

TWENTY MILES TO PORTLAND

"Oh, we'll be there to-morrow!" cried Bunny. "Then we can find Fred, and can send him to his mamma and papa!"

CHAPTER XVIII

CAMPING OUT

Mr. Brown was awakened in the morning feeling little hands tugging at him as he lay in his bunk, and childish voices crying:

"Come on, Daddy! Get up! Get up!"

"Eh? What's this? Get up!" he exclaimed. "Why, what's the matter, Bunny and Sue?" he went on, as he saw the two standing inside the curtains that hung in front of his bed.

"It's time to get up," said Sue.

"Why, it isn't six o'clock yet," answered her father, looking at his watch, which was under his pillow. "Why are you out of your bunks so early? Go back to sleep."

"But we want to get on to Portland to find Fred Ward," said Bunny. "It's only twenty miles and we can soon be there if we start early."

"There isn't much you children forget, is there?" asked Mr. Brown with a laugh, as he stretched and rubbed his eyes. Then as he opened wide his arms Bunny and Sue piled into the bunk with him, having a good, hearty tussle, until their shouts of laughter

awakened Mrs. Brown and Uncle Tad, while Dix and Splash, asleep under the big car, added their barks to the din.

“What’s the matter?” asked Mrs. Brown. “Has anything more happened?”

“Oh, these children want to leave before breakfast for Portland, to find that runaway boy,” said Mr. Brown. “Well, as long as they’re awake I suppose we might as well get up and start early. It’s about time I attended to my business affairs.”

Breakfast was soon ready, and when it had been eaten the “Ark” was once more chugging along the road. The travelers passed through several small villages and then they came to the edge of a big city which, the children’s father told them, was Portland.

“Are we going to stay in the auto while we’re here?” asked Bunny, for Mr. Brown had said they would probably remain in Portland for nearly a week, as he had several matters to look after.

“No, I’ll give you a chance to stretch your legs,” said his father. “We’ll store the automobile in a garage and you can live at a hotel while I’m getting my business in shape.”

“But what about Dix and Splash?” asked Bunny. “Where can they stay?”

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"Oh, we'll find a hotel with a garage attached to it, and leave the dogs there in charge of the 'Ark,'" said Mr. Brown.

"And what about finding Fred?" Sue queried. She, as well as Bunny, was greatly interested in the missing boy.

"Oh, I'll do all I can to find him," promised Mr. Brown.

A hotel, with a garage attached to it, was easily found in Portland, and as the "Ark" went through the streets many persons turned to look at it. But Bunny and Sue did not mind this in the least.

"They'll think we're a new kind of gypsy," said Bunny.

"And they'll all wish they was us, riding around this way," said Sue, as she laughed with Bunny.

"'They was us.' Oh, Sue!" groaned her mother.

Dix and Splash did not like very much being left alone in the garage, and they whined and barked as they were chained near the auto. But the garage keeper promised to be kind to them, to let them run about after a while and to feed and water them.

"And we'll come to see you every once in a while," said Bunny and Sue, as they patted and hugged their two pets.

Fluffy, the squirrel, now well again, had been set free, before entering the city, in the woods that he loved.

So, for a while the Browns gave up their "Ark," and settled down to hotel life. Mr. Brown had much business to look after in connection with his fish and dock affairs at home, for he was part owner of a steamship line that ran from Portland to Bellemere.

After a day or two he found a chance to ask about the missing boy. Mr. Brown first appealed to the police. But they had no record of him, and though inquiries were made of a number of theater owners, Fred Ward was not found. The man whose name he had mentioned as being the one he intended to see in Portland had moved away.

"Well, Fred may have come here," said Mr. Brown, "and, after he found his friend was gone, he may have drifted on to some other town. I'm afraid we can't find him."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Bunny. "That's too bad!"

"Let us go to look for him," proposed Sue. "We found Nellie Jones, that girl who lives at the end of our street, when she was lost away over on the next block."

“Yes, but that was different from this,” said Mrs. Brown. “Portland is a big city, and if you go wandering about in it you’ll be worse lost than you were in the big woods. You children stay with me, and your father will do all he can to find Fred.”

So Bunny and Sue had to be content to stay at the hotel, to go sightseeing with their mother, to go to the moving pictures, while Mr. Brown looked after his business. Several times each day Bunny and Sue went to the garage to see the dogs. And how glad Dix and Splash were to see the children!

Finally the day came when Mr. Brown had finished his business. He made several more attempts to find Fred, but could not do so and at last wrote to Mr. Ward, as he had promised, that, as far as could be learned, the missing boy was not in Portland.

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"We will keep watch for him on our way back to Bellemere," Mr. Brown said in his letter. "We are returning by a different route from that by which we came. Every chance we get we will look for your boy."

Then the "Ark" was taken from the garage, to the delight of the dogs no less than that of the children, and once more the Browns were on their tour.

As Mr. Brown had said, they were going back a different way from the one they had taken on coming to Portland. This was to give his family a chance to see new towns and villages. And, as the weather still promised to be fine, all looked forward to a jolly auto tour.

Every time he came to a good-sized city, and whenever he met a traveling show, Mr. Brown inquired for Fred, but it seemed that the missing boy was well hidden. Undoubtedly he did not want to be found.

Bunny and Sue had great fun on the homeward trip, which lasted even longer than the outgoing one.

The party had ridden on for several days, each one marked by sunshine, when one evening they came to a little clump of trees beside the road. It was not far from a good-sized village.

"We'll stay here over night," said Mr. Brown, "and in the morning we'll take a little side trip to a waterfall not far away."

"Oh, that will be fun!" cried Bunny. "Maybe I can make a wooden water wheel, and have it splash in the falls and go around."

"No indeed you can't!" cried his father. "The falls are too big for that. They are seventy feet high."

But, as it happened, when morning came and Mr. Brown was about to start the automobile after breakfast, there was a sudden crash, and the big car settled down on one side, like a lame duck.

"Oh, my!" cried Mrs. Brown. "What has happened now?"

"It sounded as if one of the big springs had broken," said her husband, getting down off the seat to look. "Yes," he added, "that's it. This means we'll have to stay here three or four days until I can get a new spring put in."

For a moment Bunny and Sue looked a trifle sad. Then Bunny cried:

"Oh, that will be fun. We can camp out in a tent in the woods."



“Yes, you and Sue can play at camping, if you like,” said their father. “But I think you’ll want to sleep in the auto at night.”

“Oh, no! We won’t!” laughed Sue. “Now for some fun camping out!” she added.

CHAPTER XIX

AT THE LAKE

While Mr. Brown and Uncle Tad looked again at the spring of the auto, to see just how badly it was broken, Bunny and Sue, with Mrs. Brown, went over to the clump of trees, which was not far from the road.

“Oh, this will be a grand place!” cried Sue.

“Yes,” agreed her brother. “We can put up the tent here,” and he pointed to a little knoll amid a circle of trees, “and then if it rains the water will not come in.”

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Bunny's father had told him the first thing to do, in pitching a tent, was to see that it would be dry in case of rain.

"Oh, I think you children will come into the 'Ark' when it begins to shower," said Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, no! Why, it's lots of fun in a tent in the rain!" cried Bunny. "Let's get it up right away."

"Better wait until daddy or Uncle Tad can help you," said Mother Brown. "Now we'll sit down and rest in the woods."

"Well, as long as the 'Ark' had to break down, this was the best place for it to happen, I guess," said Mr. Brown, as, with Uncle Tad, he came over to the wood where Mrs. Brown and the children were seated on a fallen tree.

"Is the break a bad one?" asked his wife.

"Yes, I think we'll need an entirely new spring, and it will take nearly a week to get that. However, as the children will have as much fun camping out here, as they would traveling in the car, it will be all right. We are not far from a town, and we can get what we want to eat from there."

"I think our cupboard is pretty well filled now," said Mrs. Brown.

"You might look to see if there is anything you need," suggested her husband. "I am going into town to find a garage man and have him arrange to get a new spring for me. Uncle Tad can be putting up the tent while I'm away."

"I'm going to help," said Sue.

"And so am I!" cried Bunny.

As has been said, there was a tent carried on top of the Ark, and this was now taken down by the old soldier and carried to the wood, there to be set up for Bunny and Sue. The tent was large enough for the children to sleep in if they wanted to. In fact, they had done so once or twice. But their mother was not sure they would do so on this trip.

However, the tent was put up and the little folding cots made ready, while Bunny brought his popgun and cannon with which to play soldier, and Sue, her Teddy bear and set of dishes with which to play keeping-house.

By the time this was done Mr. Brown had come back from the village, bringing some chocolate candy for the children. He said he had seen an automobile dealer and it would take fully a week to get a new spring for the "Ark."

They had their dinner out-of-doors, and after that Bunny and Sue played games in the tent. They said they were surely going to sleep in it at night, so they made up the cots and took their little pajamas with them into the canvas house.

“I’ll have my flashlight, too,” said Bunny; “and in case we want to get up in the night to get a drink, Sue, we can do it easy.”

“That’ll be nice,” said his sister.

In the evening, while the Browns were at supper, an old man, who seemed to be a farmer, came strolling down the road, stopping at the big automobile, and looking from it over to the children’s tent in the woods.

“You folks camping here?” he asked.

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"Well, we're traveling in our car, and we've had to stop on account of a broken spring," explained Mr. Brown. "The children thought it would be fun to have a tent up in the woods. No objection I hope, if you own those trees."

"Bless your heart! No objection at all! I do own that patch of wood, and I'm glad to see the children's tent there. It sort of reminds me of war time, when I was in the army. You're welcome to stay as long as you like, and if you want anything I've got you can have it!"

"So you were in the war, too," remarked Uncle Tad, walking up to the farmer. "I'm a veteran myself. Where did you fight?"

The two elderly men began talking and soon found that they had been in the same Southern States together, though they had never met. Then, as evening came on, the two soldiers talked of the old days of the war, while Mr. Brown built a little campfire to make it seem pleasant. Bunny and Sue listened to the tales of battles until finally Mrs. Brown, noticing that their eyes were drooping, said:

"It's time for you tots to go to bed. Hadn't you better sleep in the automobile?"

"No, we're going to our tent," said Bunny, seriously.

"Yes, we want to camp out," added Sue, sleepy as she was.

Knowing that it was perfectly safe, for the children had often camped out before, Mr. and Mrs. Brown undressed the sleepy tots, and carried them to their cots in the tent. Dix and Splash were given beds of hay on the ground near the tent and told to stay on guard, which they would be sure to do.

"Do you think they'll sleep out all night?" asked Mr. Brown of his wife, as they made ready for bed in the automobile.

"I hardly think so," she said. "I'll leave the electric light, the one outside the 'Ark' near the back steps, burning, so if they want to crawl in here during the night they can."

"Good idea," said Mr. Brown.

Soon all was quiet around the big automobile and in the little white tent over amid the trees. Bunny and Sue had fallen asleep almost as soon as their heads touched the pillows.

But they did not sleep very long. Or so, at least, it seemed to them.

Sue awakened with a start. At first she could not remember where she was, though there was a bright moon shining outside and it made the tent light inside. Then she called:

“Bunny!”

“What’s the matter?” he asked, for he was just about to awaken.

“Did you hear that?” asked Sue.

“What?” Bunny questioned.

“That sound.”

Both listened. Outside the tent was a sound that could be plainly heard by the children.

“I—I guess it’s Dix snoring,” said Bunny after a while.

“Or maybe Splash talkin’ in his sleep,” added Sue. “We aren’t afraid, are we, Bunny?”

“Not a bit, Sue! It’s nice here!” Bunny’s tone was very confident.

Bunny closed his eyes and tried to go to sleep. So did Sue.

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But neither of them could do so, though they closed their eyes very tight. Finally Sue asked:

"Bunny, are you asleep?"

"No. Are you?"

"No. And I don't believe I'm going to sleep. That funny noise is soundin' again. Say, Bunny, does Dix snore like: 'Who? Who? Who-ooo?'"

"No, I—I never heard him."

"Then it isn't Dix! It's something else," said the little girl firmly.

Bunny listened. Outside the tent he heard a mournful:

"Whoo! Who? Too-who!"

"Oh, I know what that is now!" cried Bunny. "It's an owl."

"Does an owl bite?" asked Sue:

"Sure they do!"

In the dim moonlight that shone into the tent Bunny could see his sister get out of her cot, put on her slippers and dressing robe, and then take up her Teddy bear, turning on the eyelights.

"Where are you going?" asked Bunny.

"I'm goin' home to my regular bed!" said Sue. "This tent is all right, but a owl might bite through it. You'd better come with me, Bunny Brown."

"I—I guess I will," said the little boy. "I wouldn't want you to go alone," he added brightly.

He, too, put on his robe and slippers, and then Sue, with her lighted Teddy bear, and Bunny, with his little flashlight, started toward the "Ark." The two dogs followed.

Up the steps, in the glare of the little outside electric light went the two tots. As they entered the automobile Mrs. Brown heard them and called:

"Who is there?"

"It's us," said Bunny.

“An old owl kept askin’ us questions about who was it,” added Sue, “an’ we couldn’t sleep. So we came in here.”

“Crawl into your bunks,” said Mother Brown. And that ended the children’s sleeping in the tent, for a while at least.

The next morning Mr. Jason, the soldier-farmer who owned the wood where the tent was erected, came down to the “Ark.”

“I’m going to drive over to Blue Lake to-day,” he said. “Don’t you folks want to go along? You might take your lunch and picnic there. It’s got a waterfall.”

“I did promise the children to take them to see it while we were here,” said Mr. Brown. “Thank you, we should like to go with you.” And a little later the Browns were at Blue Lake.

CHAPTER XX

DIX TO THE RESCUE

“Where is the waterfall?”

“Can’t we go in swimming?”

“I want to row a boat!”

“I want to fish!”

As soon as they jumped out of Farmer Jason’s wagon at Blue Lake, Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue were saying these things and asking these questions. The children saw before them a large body of water, that seemed a deep blue under the shining sun, and round about it were small hills “like strawberries on top of a shortcake,” as Sue said.

“Oh, what a beautiful place!” ejaculated Mrs. Brown.

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"Yes, folks around here thinks as how it *is* right pretty," said Farmer Jason. "But you haven't seen the prettiest part yet—that's the waterfall."

"Oh, that's where I want to go!" cried Bunny.

"And I want to go out in a boat," added Sue, renewing her first request.

"So do I! And fish!" chimed in Bunny.

"Now, one thing at a time," said Mr. Brown with a laugh. "You are hardly here yet and you want to do half a dozen things. Be patient. We are going to stay all day, for we brought our lunch, and I think we shall have time for everything you want to do."

"Yes, pitch right in and enjoy yourselves," said Farmer Jason with a laugh. "That's what the lake's here for. A few of us farmers own it, and the churches in this neighborhood generally has picnics here. I've got to drive over a few miles to see a man about some horses I want to buy, but I'll stop back in plenty of time to take you home."

The Browns and their lunch being safely unloaded from the wagon, including, of course, Sue's Teddy bear, Farmer Jason drove off, while Dix and Splash scampered about in the woods on the shore of the lake and went swimming, something which Bunny and Sue wanted to do at once.

"I think it is a little cool," said Mother Brown. "Besides, I didn't bring your bathing suits. I guess you can get along without a swim to-day."

Indeed there was enough else to do at Blue Lake, as the children very soon found out. Of course it was not the first time they had been at a lake in the woods, but there seemed to be something new about this place.

Perhaps the trees were greener. Certainly the lake seemed of a deeper blue than any the children had seen before. They ran up and down the pebbly shore, threw stones into the water to watch them sink, after sending out a lot of rings that made little waves on the beach. They tossed sticks into the water, which the dogs were eager to swim out for and bring back. Then Bunny had an idea.

"Sue, let's go in wading!" he cried.

"Oh, yes, let's!" she agreed instantly; and without saying anything to their father or mother about it the two took off their shoes and stockings and were walking about in the shallow water near the shore.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown, with Uncle Tad, were sitting in the shade, looking out over the beautiful lake. They were glad they had come on the little excursion, and the trouble of the broken spring of the automobile seemed turned into something good now.

“For,” said Mrs. Brown, “it has given us a chance to camp out and to see this lake, and I would not have missed this sight for a great deal.”

“Nor I, either,” said her husband. “But suppose we go to take a look at the waterfall before lunch. I know I’ll want to take a nap after I eat, and then it will soon be time for Mr. Jason to come back for us, so if we don’t go now we may miss it.”

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"That's what I say," agreed Uncle Tad, and the three arose from the fallen tree on which they had been sitting. Just then Mother Brown caught sight of Bunny and Sue.

"Look at those children!" she cried.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Brown quickly. "They haven't fallen in, I hope!"

"Well, they're *in* all the same!" chuckled Uncle Tad. "Bunny has his knickerbockers rolled up as high as they'll go, and if Sue's clothes aren't wet I'm mistaken!"

For by this time, liking the fun so much, Bunny and Sue had waded out where the water was deeper, and their clothes had become splashed by the little waves they made as they moved along.

"Oh, dear! Such tykes!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Well, it isn't too cool for wading, though it is for swimming. But I must get them dry if we are to go to the waterfall."

Mrs. Brown had brought some old towels along, for she knew what might happen when the children were going to play near a lake, and while Bunny and Sue were being told that they should have first asked whether or not they could go in wading, they were drying their pink toes on towels and getting ready to put on their shoes and stockings again.

"But we didn't think *wading* was as bad as *swimming*," said Bunny as he rubbed some sand off his fat legs.

"It isn't *exactly*," his mother answered. "But this time it was *nearly* as bad. But never mind. Come on and we'll see the waterfall."

Farmer Jason had told Mr. Brown how to walk to the place where the waters of a small river toppled over the rocks into the lake, and having hidden the bundle of lunch up in a tree, where wandering dogs could not get at it, the family set off, Dix and Splash running on ahead, to see the waterfall.

The way was through a pleasant wood, with little paths running here and there, and if Bunny and Sue had been wandering alone they probably would have gotten lost. But the road to the waterfall was a well-marked one and Mr. Brown kept to it until pretty soon Mrs. Brown said:

"Hark, I hear something."

There was a distant roaring in the woods.

"It's a trolley car," said Bunny.

His father, mother and Uncle Tad laughed.

“What a boy!” cried Mother Brown. “To think the roar of a beautiful waterfall is but the noise of a trolley car! He will never be a poet, will he Daddy?”

“I don’t want to be,” said Bunny quickly. “I’m going to be a policeman when I grow up, and have a gun.”

“All right,” chuckled Daddy Brown. “But a policeman’s life is not an easy one.”

The roaring noise became plainer, and then, as the path turned, the party came in sight of an open glade through which they could see the cataract.

It was not unlike a small Niagara in its way. For a distance back of the edge the waters of the little river bubbled and foamed over rough rocks. Then came a smooth stretch and, suddenly, the waters plunged over the broken ledge, falling about seventy feet to the lake below where they made a pool of foam.

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"Isn't it wonderful?" murmured Mother Brown.

"It certainly is a beautiful picture," came from Mr. Brown.

"It's the prettiest little fall I've ever seen," added Uncle Tad.

Sue said nothing for a minute. Both she and Bunny were looking at the waterfall closely. Then Sue began to wrap a shawl, which she had brought along, over her Teddy bear.

"What's the matter?" asked Mother Brown.

"It's like rain all over Sallie Malinda," answered the little girl. "I don't want her to catch cold, for she might not shine her 'lectric eyes any more."

"That's all Sue seems to care about the fall," laughed Mother Brown in a whisper to her husband.

As for Bunny, he seemed to think them quite wonderful—for a time. He stood as near the edge as his father would let him, looking up the rapids down which the waters rushed, to fall over the rocky edge, dropping in a smother of foam to the blue lake below. Silently he watched the smooth waters glide down like some ribbon, and then, turning to his father, he asked:

"Is this all they do?"

"All what does?" inquired Mr. Brown, not quite understanding.

"All the waterfall does. Does it just keep falling?"

"All day and all night, day after day and night after night, forever and forever," said Mr. Brown, for really the waterfall was a marvelous sight.

"Then I've seen enough," said Bunny, turning away. "If they've been doing this a long while, and will do it all next week, I can look at 'em then. Now I want to go out in a boat. I saw one as we came through the picnic grounds. I've had enough of waterfalls."

Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Uncle Tad looked at one another. But they said nothing. Bunny started down the hill again, toward the lake, Sue following with her Teddy bear.

"Bunny surely will never make a poet," chuckled his mother.

"Oh, well, perhaps there are enough poets in the world now," said Mr. Brown with a laugh.

Bunny and Sue were first at the place where the boat was kept. There were several of them, and Mr. Jason had said that picnic parties used them. The lake was not deep, he had added, and was very safe, for any one who knew anything about boats.

Bunny and Sue finally prevailed on Uncle Tad to take them out for a row after lunch, and when the two children were in their seats Dix insisted on following.

Mr. Brown, who decided to remain on shore with his wife, tried to call back the dog, but he would not come. Nor would he come when Splash barked and whined at him, asking, in dog language, I suppose, if Dix did not want to come and have a game of "water tag."

But Dix evidently wished to stay in the boat, and finally they let him remain, as he was a quiet dog, not given to jumping about. He curled up in front behind Sue and went to sleep.

Uncle Tad rowed about the lake. Bunny wished he had brought his fishing pole and line along, as they saw fish jumping in several places.

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"Never mind, we're going to be here nearly a week yet," said Uncle Tad. "We can come again."

Just how it happened Sue herself could not explain. But, somehow or other, her Teddy bear slipped from her lap and was about to fall out of the boat. That would never do, the little girl decided, and of course she made a quick motion to catch her toy.

And, just then, Bunny leaned on the same side of the boat to pick up a floating stick so that the boat tipped.

"Look out!" cried Uncle Tad. "Sit still, children!"

But he spoke too late, for, in an instant, Sue fell out of the boat and into the lake. Uncle Tad was so surprised for a moment that he sat still. But not so Dix. He had awakened in a second, and with a loud bark sprang overboard to the rescue of the little girl.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CIRCUS

"Oh my!" cried Bunny Brown, as he saw his sister topple out of the boat into the lake. "Oh, dear!"

By this time Uncle Tad, the old soldier, was ready for action. He took off his coat, without standing up in the boat, for well he knew how dangerous that was, and he was just ready to slip overboard into the water, the bottom of which he could see, when Dix, who had thrust his head under the surface, came up with Sue held in his strong jaws, his teeth fastened in her dress near the neck.

"Oh, Dix! Dix!" cried Bunny, in delight. "I'm so glad you saved my sister. Oh, Dix! I'll love you all my life!"

Dix, holding Sue with her head well above the water, was swimming toward the boat. Bunny, eager to do what he could to help his sister, was leaning over the side, ready to reach her as soon as the dog came near enough. Then Uncle Tad cried:

"Sit still, Bunny! I'll take Sue in. But I must do it at the stern of the boat, and not over the side, as that might tip us over. You sit still in the middle of the boat."

Bunny, who had lived near the seashore all his life knew that "stern" meant the back of the boat. And he remembered that his father had often told him if ever he fell out of a boat and wanted to get in again without tipping the boat over, to do so from the stern, or from the bow, which is the front. A row-boat will not tip backwards or forwards as easily as it will to either side.

As soon as Bunny heard what Uncle Tad said, he obeyed. He sat down in the bottom of the boat between the seats. Then the old soldier, going to the stern, called to Dix:

“Around this way, old dog! Bring her here and I’ll take her in. Come on, Dix!”

Whether the dog knew that it was safer to bring a person in over the stern of a boat or over the bow instead of over the side, I do not know. At any rate he did what Uncle Tad told him to do, and in another moment was close to the boat with Sue in his jaws. Uncle Tad lifted her into the boat and at once turned her on her face and raised her legs in the air. This was to let any water that she might have swallowed run out.

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Sue began to kick her legs. She gasped and wiggled.

"Keep still!" cried Bunny. "Uncle Tad is giving you first aid." Bunny had often seen the lifeguards at the beach do this to swimmers who went too far out.

"I—I won't keep still, Bunny Brown!" gasped Sue. "And I—I don't need any first aid! I just held my breath under water, I did, and I didn't swallow much anyhow. I was holding my breath when Uncle Tad began to raise up my legs, that's why I wiggled and couldn't speak. I'm all right now and I'm much obliged to you and Dix, Uncle Tad, and I hope my Sallie Malinda isn't in the lake."

Sue said this all at one time and then she had to stop for breath. But what she said was true. Her father had given her swimming lessons, and Sue was really a good little diver, and perfectly at home where the water was not too rough or deep. And, as she had said, as soon as she felt herself in the water she had taken a long breath and held it before her nose and mouth went under.

So while Sue was holding her breath, Dix had reached down and caught her, before she had really sunk to the bottom. For Sue had on a light and fluffy dress, and that really was a sort of life preserver. As it was, the dog had brought Sue to the boat before she had swallowed more than a few spoonfuls of water, which did her no harm. Of course she was all wet.

"You've gone in swimming, anyhow," said Bunny, as soon as he saw that his sister was all right.

"Yes, and we must get her to shore as soon as we can," said Uncle Tad. "Climb in, Dix, and don't scatter any more water on us than you can help, though we'll forgive you almost anything for the way you saved Sue."

The dog climbed in, over the stern where Uncle Tad told him to, and then gave himself a big shake.

All dogs do that when they come from the water, and Dix only acted naturally. He gave Bunny and Uncle Tad a shower bath but they did not mind. Sue could not be made any wetter than she already was.

"Now for a fast row to shore," said Uncle Tad. "I saw a farmhouse not far from where we got out of Mr. Jason's wagon, and I guess you can dry your clothes there, Sue."

As Uncle Tad started to row Sue cried:

"But where's Sallie Malinda? Where's my Teddy bear? I won't go without her!"

She spoke as if she meant it. Bunny and Uncle Tad looked on both sides of the boat, and there, on the white sandy bottom of the lake, in about four feet of water, lay the Teddy bear. It's eyes were lighted which made it the more easily seen, for Sue must have pressed the switch as she herself fell overboard. And, as it happened, the batteries and electric lighted eyes were not harmed by water.

"I'll get her for you," said Uncle Tad, and he reached for the Teddy bear with a boat hook, soon bringing up the toy.

"Oh, I hope she isn't spoiled!" cried Sue.

"She can dry out with you when you get to the farmhouse," said Bunny, and then Uncle Tad began to row toward shore.

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Mr. and Mrs. Brown were surprised, and not a little worried, when they heard what had happened to Sue. But the little girl herself was quite calm about it.

"I just held my breath," she said. "I knew Bunny or somebody would get me out."

"I was going to," declared Bunny.

"Yes, I guess he'd have dived over in another second," remarked Uncle Tad. "But Dix was ahead of both of us."

"Well, I'm glad you're all right," said Mother Brown. "I do hope you won't take cold. We must get your wet clothes off."

Just then Mr. Jason came back with his horses and wagon, and he quickly drove the whole party to a near-by farmhouse where Sue, and all the others, were made welcome. Before the warm kitchen fire Sue was dressed in some dry clothes of a little girl who lived on the farm, while her own were put near the kitchen stove.

In a few hours the party was ready to go back to the "Ark," meanwhile having spent a good time at the farmhouse. Sue seemed all right, and really she had not been in much danger, for the water was not deep, and Uncle Tad was a good swimmer.

Bunny and Sue slept rather late the next morning, but when they did awaken they heard a queer rumbling on the road beside which their automobile was drawn up.

"Is that thunder?" asked Bunny.

"It sounds like it," answered Sue, who showed no signs of having caught cold from her bath in the lake.

The children peered from the little windows near their bunks. They saw going along the road a number of gaily painted wagons—great big wagons, drawn by eight or ten horses each, and with broad-tired wheels.

Together Bunny and Sue cried:

"It's a circus! It's a circus! Hurrah!"

CHAPTER XXII

A LION IS LOOSE

Bunny Brown and his Sister Sue lost no time in getting dressed that morning, and hurrying out to the tiny dining room where their mother was getting breakfast.



"Did you see it?" gasped Sue.

"Have the elephants gone past yet?" Bunny inquired, his eyes big with excitement.

"Oh, you mean the circus," said Mrs. Brown. "No, I haven't seen any elephants yet. The big wagons just started to go past."

"Then let's hurry up our breakfast and watch for the elephants and the tigers," cried Bunny, greatly worried lest he miss any of the animals.

"You have plenty of time," said Uncle Tad, who was out near the back steps of the automobile, sorting his fish lines and hooks. "The circus has just started to go past. Those wagons have in them the tent poles, the canvas for the tents, the things for the men to eat and the big stoves. These are always unloaded first—in fact, they are sent on ahead of the rest of the show.

"Not until later in the morning will the animals and the other wagons come along. The circus must have unloaded over at Kirkwell," and he pointed to a railroad station about a mile away. "The tents are going up on the other side of this town, I heard some of the circus drivers say."

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"Oh, won't we have fun watching them go past?" cried Sue. "I wonder if they'll have a parade? If they do, and it goes past our house—I mean our automobile—we can see it better than anybody, can't we?"

"Yes. But the parade won't come this far out into the country," said Uncle Tad. "It will go through the streets of the town."

"Where are you going?" asked Bunny, suddenly looking at the old soldier.

"I thought I'd go fishing over to Blue Lake. Looked yesterday as if there were plenty of fish there. Want to go with me, Bunny Brown?"

"Huh? An' the circus comin' to town?" asked Bunny, clipping the end off his words. "Say, Mother, aren't we going to the circus?" he asked quickly.

"Well, I didn't hear anything about it," said Mrs. Brown slowly.

"Can't you take us, Uncle Tad?" pleaded Sue, for she, as much as did her brother, wanted to see the big show.

"Well, I suppose I *could* put off my fishing till another day," said Uncle Tad slowly. "Are you *sure* you two want to go?"

"Are we!" cried Bunny.

"Oh, I want to go—so much!" and Sue showed just how much by putting her arms around Uncle Tad's neck and hugging him as hard as she could. That was her way of showing "how much."

"Well, if it's as much as that I guess I'll have to take you," laughed Uncle Tad. "Mind you, I don't want to go myself," and he looked at Mrs. Brown in a queer way. "I don't care anything about a circus—never did in fact. But if an old man has to give up his fishing trip, just to take two children to one of the wild animal shows, why I guess it will have to be done, that's all. But really I don't want to go," and he shook his head very seriously.

"Oh, Uncle Tad!" cried Sue. "Don't you want to see the elephants?"

"Nope," and the old soldier kept on shaking his head "crossways," as Bunny said.

"And don't you want to see the lions?"

"Nope."

"Nor the tigers?"

“Nope.”

“Not even the camels and the monkeys and the men jumping over horses’ backs, nor the giraffes with their long necks—don’t you want to see *any* of them?” Sue was talking faster and faster all the while.

Uncle Tad did not say anything, but a funny look came into his eyes, and Bunny was almost sure the old soldier was laughing on one side of his face at Mother Brown. Then Bunny cried:

“Oh, Sue! He’s just fooling! He wants to go as much as we do!”

“Oh, Uncle Tad, I’m so glad!” cried Sue. “I love you—so—much!” and again she hugged him as hard as she could, and kissed him too.

“Now I’ll surely have to go,” he chuckled.

Breakfast was soon over, and by that time Bunny and Sue were so excited that they did not know what to do. Somehow they managed to get properly dressed, and by that time other circus wagons came along.

These wagons were gilded and painted more gaily than the first that had gone past. And from some of them came low growls or roars.

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"Oh, they've got lions inside," said Sue, opening her eyes wide.

"And tigers, too," added Bunny in a wondering voice. "But I want to see the elephants," he added.

Pretty soon the big elephants came along, and behind them came camels and troops of horses. There were also a number of small boys and some girls who were following the circus to the lot where the big tents were already being put up.

"Say, I just like to see them!" cried Bunny as the elephants swung past the "Ark," which some of the country boys took to be one of the circus wagons broken down. "Elephants are great! I guess I'm going to be an elephant rider when I grow up, instead of a policeman," he said, as he saw men sitting on the heads of the big elephants while they lumbered heavily along.

"It would be fun to ride on one of them," said Sue. "But come on, Uncle Tad. Take us to the circus. We want to see the parade."

"We want to see *everything*," added Bunny.

"The side shows and *everything*, and, please, Mother, may we have some peanuts and popcorn?"

"Oh, I don't want you eating a lot of things that will make you ill," said Mrs. Brown.

"I mean to feed to the elephants," said Bunny. "Elephants love popcorn and peanuts a lot. Of course Sue and I could eat a little," he added.

"Well, a *very* little," agreed his mother. "Elephants are not made ill so easily as little boys. But get ready, if you are going."

It did not take the children and Uncle Tad long to get ready. As it was quite a distance from where the "Ark" was stationed beside the road to the circus ground, Uncle Tad hired Mr. Jason to drive him and the children over in the wagon.

"Oh, I see the tents!" cried Bunny, as they neared the ground.

"And I hear the music!" added Sue. "But we mustn't miss the parade."

The children were just in time for this, and when they had seen the procession wind its way about the streets they went back to the big white tents. Then the circus began.

What Bunny and Sue saw you can well imagine, for I think most of you have been to a circus, once at least. There were the wild animals—the lions and the tigers in their cages, the funny monkeys, the long-necked giraffes—and then came the performance.

The clowns did funny tricks, the acrobats leaped high in the air, or fell into the springy nets. All this the children saw, and they ate some popcorn and peanuts, but fed more than they ate to the elephants.

Uncle Tad seemed to enjoy himself, too, though, every once in a while he would lean over and say to Bunny and Sue:

“Aren’t you tired? Let’s go home!”

And the performance was not half through! Bunny and Sue just looked at him and smiled. They knew he was joking.

But the circus came to an end at last, and though they were sorry they had to leave, Bunny and Sue were, late in the afternoon, well on their way to their automobile camp again. They talked of nothing but what they had seen, and every time they spoke of the show they liked it more and more.

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"I wish we could go again to-night," said Bunny.

"It isn't good for little children to go to a circus at night," said Uncle Tad. "You've seen enough."

Of course Daddy Brown and Mother Brown had to hear all about it over the supper table, and they were glad the children had had such a good time. At night when they sat around a little campfire on the ground near the automobile, they could hear, in the distance, the music of the circus.

In the middle of the night Mr. and Mrs. Brown were awakened by hearing the noise of many persons rushing past on the road alongside of which their automobile was drawn up. Also the chugging of automobiles and the patter of horses' feet could be heard.

"I wonder what it can be," said Mrs. Brown. "Is it the circus coming back again?"

"No, they would be going the other way. I'll see if I can find out what it is."

Slipping on a bath robe, Mr. Brown went to the back door of the automobile. He saw a crowd of people rushing along.

"What's the matter?" he called.

"One of the circus lions is loose," was the answer, "and we're chasing it!"

[Illustration: BUNNY AND SUE FED THE ELEPHANTS. *Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue on an Auto Tour. Page 218.*]

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SCRATCHED BOY

"What's that? What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Brown. In the darkness she had slipped to her husband's side. She, too, looked out on the crowd of men and boys rushing past in the moonlight. "What has happened?" she asked again, as Mr. Brown did not appear to have heard what she said.

"As nearly as I could understand," he said slowly, speaking in a low voice, "one of the men who ran past said a lion had broken loose from the circus."

"Oh, how dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "What shall we do? Did Uncle Tad bring his gun with him?"

“Hush! Don’t wake the children,” said Mr. Brown. “They might be frightened if they heard that a lion was loose.”

“Frightened? I should think any one would be frightened!” exclaimed Mrs. Brown. “A savage lion raging around at night, trying to get something to eat——”

“Now please don’t get excited,” begged Mr. Brown. “There is no danger—at least I believe there isn’t.”

“No danger? And with a lion loose—a hungry lion!”

“That’s where I think you’re wrong,” said her husband. “The circus people usually keep their lions and other wild animals well fed. They know the danger a hungry beast might be if he should get loose. And I dare say they often do get loose, for all sorts of things may happen when the cages are taken to so many different places.

“But though this lion has broken loose, I don’t believe it would bite even a rooster if it crowed at him. I mean he won’t be hungry, because he’ll have been well fed before the circus started away.”

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"Then you don't believe there is any danger?"

"Well, not enough to worry about. Another thing is that usually circus lions are so tame, having been caged so long, that they are fairly gentle."

"I read of one that bit his keeper," said Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, of course there are *some* dangerous lions in circuses. But we won't believe this one that got away is that kind until we are sure. There's a man who seems tired of running. I think he's going to stop and I'll ask him how it happened."

One of the crowd of men and boys, racing past the "Ark," had slowed his pace, being tired it seemed. Mr. Brown leaned out of the back door and called to him:

"What is the matter? Did a lion really get loose from the circus?"

"That's what really did happen, sir. Are you one of the circus folks?"

"No, we are just travelers. We are stopping here because one of the springs of our automobile is broken."

"Oh, excuse me. I thought this was one of the circus wagons. Yes, as they were loading the lion's cage on the train a few hours ago, it slipped, fell on its side and broke. The biggest lion in the circus got away before they could catch him, and they say he headed down this way. The circus men started after him with nets and ropes, and they offered a reward of twenty-five dollars to whoever caught him. So a lot of us started out, but I guess I'll go back. I'm tired out. I didn't have an automobile like some."

"Then the lion didn't get loose while the circus performance was going on?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, no. And it's a good thing it didn't, or there'd have been a terrible scare and maybe lots of folks hurt in the rush. The show was over, and most of the animal tent stuff was loaded on the flat cars when the lion's cage broke."

"Aren't you afraid to try to catch him?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Well, I didn't stop to think of that. I don't know though that I am. I just started off with a rush—the same as lots of others did who were watching the circus load—when the lion got loose. I thought maybe I could earn that twenty-five dollars. You see that's given to whoever finds where the lion is hiding. The circus men just want to know that and then they'll do the catching. There really isn't much danger."

"Well, I shouldn't like to try it," murmured Mrs. Brown.

"I guess I'll give up, too," said the man.

He called a "good-night!" to Mr. and Mrs. Brown and went back along the road. There were no more people to be seen, those who had gone lion-hunting being now out of sight.

"Well, I'm glad the children didn't wake up," said Mrs. Brown, for, strange as it may seem, Bunny and Sue had slept all through the noise. But then they were tired because of having gone to the circus. "Shall you tell them about the lion being loose?"

"Oh, yes, to-morrow, of course. While I think there is little danger I would not want them to stray too far away, for the poor old lion may be hiding in the woods or among the rocks, and he might spring out on whoever passed his hiding place."

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"Why do you call him a 'poor old lion'? I think he must be a very savage fellow."

"Oh, I think he'll turn out to be a gentle one," said her husband with a laugh.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Brown went to bed, after Uncle Tad had heard the story, and the rest of the night passed quietly. At the breakfast table Bunny and Sue were told of what had happened.

Bunny wanted to go right out with Uncle Tad, who was to take his gun.

"We'll hunt him and get the twenty-five dollars," said the little fellow.

"No. You'd better play around here for a while," ordered his father. "It will be safer."

"I wouldn't let him out of my sight for a million dollars!" cried Mrs. Brown.

"But we could take the two dogs, Dix and Splash, with us, and they could bite the lion if he chased us," said Bunny.

His mother shook her head, and Bunny knew there was no use teasing any more.

"I wouldn't go after any lion!" declared Sue. "And I want to find a good place to hide Sallie Malinda."

"What for?" asked Bunny.

"So the lion can't find her," said the little girl. "Lions don't like bears and this one might bite Sallie Malinda. Then maybe she couldn't flash her eyes any more." The Teddy bear had dried out after the fall into the lake, and was as good as ever.

So Bunny and Sue had to stay and play around the automobile, not going far away. Though at first they missed the long tramps in the fields and through the woods, they were good children and did as they were bid. Besides, deep down in his heart, Bunny was just a *little bit* afraid of the lion, even though he had said he wanted to go hunting for him with Uncle Tad.

Two days passed, and the lion had not been found. The circus had gone on, leaving two men in the town near which the automobile was stranded. These men, with a spare cage which had been left with them, were ready to go out with nets and ropes and capture the lion as soon as any one should bring in word as to where it was hiding.

The countrymen and the boys, who had no other work to do, still kept up the lion hunt, some with dogs, but the big circus animal was well hidden.

"If he was playing hide-and-go-seek," said Bunny, "I'd holler 'Givie-up! Givie-up! Come on in free!' For I never could find him, he has hidden himself so good."

"Well, I wish he would go and hide himself far, far away," almost snapped Sue. "Then we could go around like we used to, and go on the lake."

"I wish so too," agreed Bunny.

It was getting rather tiresome for the children to stay so close to "home," as they called the automobile, but Mr. Brown said the new spring would arrive in a few days, and then they would travel on again, far from where the lion was hiding.

"And we can keep on looking for Fred Ward," said Bunny. In the excitement over the circus the runaway boy had been almost forgotten.

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It was three days after the lion had broken loose, and evening was approaching, when Mrs. Jason, wife of the farmer who had been so kind to the Browns, came hurrying down to the automobile beside the road. She was out of breath and seemed much excited.

"Oh, Mr. Brown!" she exclaimed. "Do you know anything about doctoring?"

"About doctoring! Why? Is Mr. Jason ill?"

"No, but I've got a badly hurt boy up at my house. He's all scratched up."

"Has he been picking berries?" asked Bunny.

"No. They're worse scratches than that. Big, deep ones on his face, hands and shoulders. I've bandaged him as best I could, and sent Mr. Jason for the doctor; but I was wondering if you could do anything until Dr. Fandon came."

"A scratched boy?" repeated Mr. Brown slowly. "What scratched him?"

"A great big lion, he says!" exclaimed Mrs. Jason. "I declare I'm so excited I don't know what to do!" and she sat down on a stool Mrs. Brown placed for her near the back steps of the automobile.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BARKING DOG

Mr. and Mrs. Brown, not to say Bunny, Sue and Uncle Tad, were very, very much surprised when Mrs. Jason said the boy had been scratched by a lion.

"Are you sure about it?" asked the children's father.

"That's what he says," replied the farmer's wife. "He is certainly badly scratched, as I could see for myself. Whether it was by a lion or something else I can't say, never having seen a lion's scratches. The boy might be making up some story, but he certainly *is* scratched."

"The circus lion!" cried Mrs. Brown. "Oh, that must be the one that did it! The lion must be roaming around here! We must lock the automobile and stay inside!"

"Now please don't get excited," begged Mr. Brown. "In the first place this boy may not be telling the truth. He is scratched, for Mrs. Jason has seen the marks and bandaged them up, she says. But it may be the boy fell down in the bushes, or among the rocks and got scratched that way. Or it may have been some other wild animal in the woods

that attacked him. There are some animals around here, aren't there?" he asked the farmer's wife.

"Well, skunks, groundhogs and the like of that, with maybe a fox or two. Of course foxes or groundhogs will bite if any one tries to catch them, but I don't know that they'd scratch, though they might if they were put to it. I never saw such scratches as these. And, as you say, Mrs. Brown, it *may* have been the circus lion which is hiding around here."

"You don't seem very frightened over it," said Mrs. Brown.

"Well, what's the use of being frightened until I see it?" asked Mrs. Jason. "I'm more worried about that poor boy. I wish I could do something for him to ease his pain until Dr. Fandon comes. He may be a long while."

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"I'll come up with you and see what I can do," promised Mr. Brown. "Uncle Tad knows something about soldiers' wounds, and perhaps he could——"

"Oh, don't take Uncle Tad with you!" pleaded Mrs. Brown. "We need *one* man around here if there's a lion loose in the woods. Come back as soon as you can," she begged her husband as he walked toward the farmhouse with Mrs. Jason.

"How did you happen to see the boy?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I was out gathering the eggs near the henhouse," said Mrs. Jason, "and I heard a sort of groaning noise. Then I saw somebody coming toward me.

"At first I thought it was a tramp, and I was just going to call my husband or one of the men, when I heard crying, and then I saw it was only a boy, and that he was bleeding."

"How long ago was it that you found the scratched boy?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Nearly an hour now. As soon as I saw what the matter was I hurried him into the house and got him on a couch. Mr. Jason and I did what bandaging we could, and then I made him go for the doctor."

"Did you know the boy, and did he say where the lion attacked him?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I never saw him before, that I know of. But he just managed to say the beast jumped out of the bushes at him when he was coming through our rocky glen, then all of a sudden he fainted."

"Where is this rocky glen of yours where you say the lion jumped out at the boy?"

"About two miles from here, back in the hills. Waste land, mostly. You aren't thinking of going there, are you?"

"Not now, though I think I'd better send word to the circus people that their lion is around here."

"Yes, it would be a good thing."

By this time Mr. Brown and Mrs. Jason were at the house.

"I'll take a look at him," said Mr. Brown.

He saw, lying on a couch, a tall lad, whose face and hands were covered with bandages. The youth was tossing to and fro and murmuring, but what he said could not well be understood, except that now and then he spoke of a lion.

"I didn't dare take his coat off to get at the scratches on his shoulders," said Mrs. Jason. "I thought I'd let the doctor do that."

"Yes, I guess it will be best. But if you have any sweet spirits of nitre in the house I'll give him that to quiet him and keep down the fever."

"Oh, we always keep nitre on hand," and Mrs. Jason helped Mr. Brown give some to the lad. In a little while he grew quieter, and then Dr. Fandon came in with Mr. Jason.

The two men helped the physician get the youth undressed and into a spare bed, and then the doctor, with Mrs. Jason's help, dressed the wounds on the boy's face and shoulders, while the men waited outside.

Then, having done what he could for the boy, and promising to call in the morning, when he could tell more about the boy's condition, the doctor went home, while Mr. Brown and Mr. Jason planned to get word of the lion to the two circus men who were still at the hotel in the village.

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"I'll drive over with you," said the farmer. This they did, though it was late to drive to town, being after nine o'clock, stopping at the "Ark" on the way to tell what had taken place at the farmhouse.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "We must try to help him."

"I'll let him play with my Teddy bear when he gets well," said Sue, and all the others laughed.

"The circus men will get after the lion in the morning," said the farmer when he and Mr. Brown were back at the "Ark" on their return from town.

Though they were excited, and not a little afraid, Bunny and Sue were at last in bed, but only after Uncle Tad had promised to sit up all night, as he used to do when a sentry in the war, and, with his gun, watch for any sign of the lion.

"And if you have to shoot him, which I hope you don't," said Bunny, "call me first so I can look at him. But I don't want to see him shot. Just make him go back to the circus."

"I will," promised Uncle Tad.

Bunny and Sue were up early the next morning, and even before breakfast they wanted their father to go up to the farmhouse to find out about the scratched boy, and also whether or not the lion had been caught.

"We'll see about the boy first," said Mr. Brown. "I guess it won't do any harm for me to take the children up," he said to his wife.

"You will be careful, won't you?" she begged.

"Indeed I will," he promised.

So Bunny, with his sister and his father, walked up to Mr. Jason's home. Dix and Splash went along, of course, and stood expectant at the door as Mr. Brown rang.

"Oh, good morning!" cried Mrs. Jason as she answered the bell. "Our scratched boy is much better this morning. He is not as badly hurt as we feared. Come in."

Mr. Brown and the children entered, and of course the dogs followed.

"Go back, Dix and Splash," ordered Mr. Brown. Splash turned and went out on the stoop, but Dix kept on. The dog was acting in a strange manner. The door to a downstairs bedroom, where the wounded boy was lying, was open. Dix ran in and the next moment he began to bark wildly, getting on the bed with his forefeet.

“Down, Dix! Down!” cried Mr. Brown. “What do you mean, sir?”

But Dix kept on barking and whining. He tried to lick the hands of the scratched boy.

“Oh, drive him away!” cried Mrs. Jason. “He’ll hurt the boy.”

But the boy, who seemed much better indeed, rose up in bed and cried:

“Don’t send him away! That’s Dix, my dog! Oh, Dix, you found me, didn’t you?”

CHAPTER XXV

FOUND AT LAST

What with the barking of Dix, in which Splash, out on the porch, joined, the manner in which the scratched boy hugged the half-wild animal on his bed, the astonishment of Bunny Brown, his sister, his father and Mrs. Jason—well, there was enough excitement for a few minutes to satisfy even the children.

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Sue did not know what to make of the strange actions of Dix on the bed where the injured boy had been sleeping, and she whispered to Bunny:

"Maybe Dix wants to bite him!"

But Bunny shook his head. He understood what had happened.

"Don't you see, Sue!" he said. "He's been found."

"O-o-oh!" gasped the little girl.

"Yes, sir, Fred Ward, the boy who ran away from next door to us, has been found. That's his dog, Dix. And Dix knows him, just as we thought he would, even though his face is pretty well bandaged up. That's Fred Ward!"

"Is that your name?" asked Mr. Brown, who also understood what had happened.

"Well, I guess it is," was the slow answer. "But it isn't the name I've been going by lately. I called myself Professor Rombodno Prosono, but now——"

"Then, it was you all blacked up like a minstrel!" cried Bunny.

"Yes, I was playing on the banjo for Dr. Perry's medicine show, but when I saw you in the crowd I managed to get away. Then I joined the circus and now——"

"Don't talk and excite yourself," said Mrs. Jason. "The doctor will be here in a little while and perhaps he can take the bandages off your face, so your friends will know you."

"Dix knows him all right," said Mr. Brown, and indeed the dog was half wild with joy at having found his master.

Dr. Fandon came in a few minutes later and said Fred was much better. When the face bandages were taken off, so new ones could be put on, Bunny and Sue at once recognized Fred, though his face was badly scratched.

Dix tried to lick his master's face, but had to be stopped for fear he might do Fred harm. So the dog had to show his joy by thumping his tail and whining softly.

Then Fred told his story. As has been said, he ran away from home because he felt his father should not have punished him.

"But I've had a good deal worse punishment since," the lad said, "and I'm sorry I ever ran away. I'd have gone home long ago only I was ashamed."

"Well, you needn't be," said Mr. Brown. "Your father and your mother both want you back. We have been looking for you as well as we could on our auto tour. But it was Dix who knew you first."

"I wish he had seen me before the lion did," said Fred, smiling a little. "I wonder where he went to after clawing me?"

At that moment there was a noise out in the yard back of the farmhouse. The crowing of roosters and the squawking of hens could be heard, mingled with a woman's voice.

"That's my wife!" cried Mr. Jason, jumping up, but at that moment his wife came into the room.

"I've caught it," she said coolly, though her face was flushed.

"Caught what?" they all cried.

"The circus lion," she answered. "I went out to the henhouse, and there he was crouching down in a corner, and looking as if he intended to have his choice of my fat pullets."

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"What did you do?" asked Mr. Brown and Mr. Jason together.

"Well, I happened to have a broom stick in my hand so I hit him a smart blow over the nose to teach him to let my hens alone, and then I drove the chickens outside and locked the lion in the henhouse. He's there now. You'd better send for the circus folks to take him away. I don't want him around the place scaring the fowls."

"Didn't he scare you?" asked Mr. Brown.

"I never stopped to think whether he did or not," was the cool answer. "I just whacked him over the nose and he whined and cuddled up in a corner like a whipped dog."

"Oh, let's go out and look at the lion in the chicken coop!" cried Bunny.

"No, indeed," said his father. "Wait until the circus men come and put him in the cage."

A neighboring farmer had a telephone, and word was sent to one of the circus men who had stayed at the village hotel, while his companion had gone to the rocky glen with a crowd of men and boys to try to find the lion there, after the alarm given by Mr. Jason.

The circus man, who had remained in the hotel, came with a light cage, drawn by horses, and the lion was easily driven from the henhouse into the cage and was soon safe behind locks and bars.

"Mrs. Jason caught the lion!" cried the crowd that gathered to watch what happened.

"Did he bite you?" she was asked.

"Never a bite," she answered smiling.

"What! Poor old Tobyhanna bite?" cried one of the circus men. "Why, he hasn't but two teeth in his head and we have to feed him on boiled meat. He's no more dangerous than a tame dog, and when you hit him over the nose with your broom, lady, you must have hurt his feelin's dreadful."

"Well, I didn't mean to be *rough*," said Mrs. Jason with a smile, "but it's the first time I ever caught a lion."

"Yes, and you get the reward, too," added the circus man, as he paid the farmer's wife.

Then he started away with the lion in the cage to ship him back to the circus. And poor, old, almost toothless Tobyhanna, curled up in the corner of his cage and ate some bread and milk the farmer's wife gave him. He was happy he had been caught.

Fred Ward's story was soon told. After running away from home he joined the medicine show, because it gave him a chance to play the banjo he liked so well. He left Dr. Perry because he saw the Browns and feared they might have him sent home.

Then he joined the circus, the very one from which the lion had escaped. In that show Fred had been one of a group who blacked up and played on mandolins and guitars and banjos, and though he had played in front of Bunny, Sue and Uncle Tad, none of them knew him, nor did Fred see them.

The night the show left the town, and just before the lion escaped, Fred had a quarrel with one of the managers and left. He was not paid his money and, quite miserable, he wandered away, not knowing what to do. He became lost in the woods, and finally he reached the rocky gulch where the lion attacked him.

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"It was just an accident. Tobyhanna didn't mean to hurt me," said Fred. "I'd often fed him and scratched his nose for him in the circus. But I walked right over him as he was asleep in between some rocks, and when he jumped out, as much scared as I was he happened to scratch me. Then I managed to get to this house and I guess I must have gone out of my head or fainted or something."

"You did," said Dr. Fandon, "but you are all right now."

"We must send word to your father that you are safe," said Mr. Brown, and this was done.

Fred was not quite well enough to be moved, but his father came for him the next day, and he made a great fuss over his boy. They understood each other better after that.

Mr. Ward thanked everybody who had done anything to help his son, and a few days later took Fred and Dix home, for the dog would not leave his master, much as he liked Splash, Bunny and Sue.

In due time Tobyhanna, the lion, was taken back to the circus, and he never got out of his cage again, as far as I ever heard.

"Well, I think we can keep on with our tour now," said Mr. Brown, a few days after the new spring had arrived.

"It seems almost like leaving home to go away from here," said Mother Brown, as they prepared to leave.

"We've had such fun camping here," added Sue.

"And lots of things have happened, too!" added Bunny. "I never was near where a lion was locked up in a chicken coop before."

"And I don't want to be again," said his mother.

"All aboard!" cried Uncle Tad.

And once more the "Ark," was traveling along the country road back toward Bellemere. The auto trip had been a great success, and Bunny and Sue talked of it many times, and of how Fred Ward had been found, and of the escaped lion that had scratched him.

But now it is time to say good-bye, though you must not think this is the last of the adventures of Bunny and Sue, even though there are no more in this book. There were more ahead of them, but, for the present, we will leave them.

THE END

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Transcriber's note:

Punctuation normalized.

Page 13, the word "the" was inserted into "and of the fun".

Page 108, "That's what we we're trying to find out." Changed to "That's what we're trying to find out."