

Laugh and Play eBook

Laugh and Play

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Laugh and Play

[Illustration:]

“Come and have a game at soldiers, Dulcie.”

“I can’t, Harold; don’t you see I’m busy?”

“Busy writing rubbish! How you can be so silly as to waste your time like that I can’t think. It isn’t as if you really *could* write poetry, and I call it downright conceited for a girl to pretend she can. So, do leave off, there’s a dear, and come and have a game. I want to try my new cannon, and you shall have first shot if you will come.”

But Dulcie was offended. A week ago she had written a verse about Harold’s dog, and father had said it was very good and had given her sixpence for writing it. Since then she had spent most of her spare time trying to write other verses, but this afternoon she was beginning to get a little tired of being a poetess and to long for a good game.

When Harold suggested soldiers, she really wanted to play, for she was almost as fond of boys’ games as her brother was; but she thought it sounded grand to pretend she was busy. Then when Harold called her silly and conceited she grew angry and sulked.

“Do come, Dulcie; don’t be cross!”

“Go away, you rude boy,” replied Dulcie.

Harold tried coaxing for a little while longer, and then he went away and left his sister alone in the school-room. It was very lonely there, and before five minutes had passed Dulcie heartily regretted that she had refused Harold’s offer.

“But he was horrid,” she said, “and anyway *he* is miserable too; he can’t bear playing alone.”

Harold, however, was anything but miserable, for, on peeping out of the window, Dulcie saw him in the next-door garden helping the children there to make a big snow-man. He was laughing and shouting, and had evidently forgotten all about her.

A lump seemed to have suddenly risen in her throat, and as she crept back to the table two big tears fell splashing down upon the poem she had been trying to write and blotted out some of the words; then down went her head upon the paper, and in another moment she was sobbing pitifully.



It was almost dark when Harold came running up to the school-room, and, bursting open the door, cried cheerily: "Such a lark, Dulcie; just listen. Hullo," he added, "what's the matter?"

In another moment his arm was round his sister's neck and she was rubbing her tear-stained cheek against his cold rosy one.

[Illustration:]

"O, Harold," she sobbed, "I've been so miserable. I'm sorry I was so disagreeable."

"Never mind; is *that* all you're crying about? Well, I was horrid too: I teased you when you were writing, and I daresay your poetry *is* clever."

"No, it isn't," said Dulcie; "it's as stupid as stupid can be, and I'll never try to write a piece again," and with that she picked up the offending paper and dropped it into the fire.



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Harold gave her a brotherly hug, for he really was glad Dulcie had come to this decision, for he had found her new accomplishment a little trying at times.

“But I haven’t told you my news yet,” he said. “I’ve been playing with the Grahams all the afternoon, and Mrs. Graham came out just now and has invited us to go there to tea and have a good game afterwards, and Tom told me there was to be a Christmas-tree. So come along and let’s tell nurse, for it’s time to get ready.”

O, what a good time the children had that evening, and how they did laugh and play! Dulcie was amongst the merriest there, and when she and Harold went home that night, laden with toys from the Christmas-tree, she said: “Wasn’t I a silly girl to sit and cry and be miserable this afternoon, when I might have been so happy?”

L. L. Weedon.

The Elder Tree

[Illustration:]

There was a fascinating little stream just at the other side of the low wall that bounded the garden, and this stream had more attractions for Sydney than anything else about the holiday home.

It was not for its cool murmuring sound that Sydney liked it, nor for its crystal clearness—though he must have felt the charm of all this during those hot August days. He had found a beautiful place where he could put a water-wheel, and he was as busy as he could be planning and making one. He had his little box of tools with him, and it was easy to get pieces of wood; and for the rest Sydney’s cleverness in “making things” was well known to his sisters and brother, and held in great reverence by them. They never “meddled,” and so were graciously allowed to come and admire.

“O, bother!” exclaimed Sydney, “here’s this little plague! You can’t come here, Walter,” he called out. “Go back to the garden and play there.”

But little Walter had already climbed over the loose stones and was running towards the stream.

Sydney jumped up from the ground and went to meet him.

“Did you hear, Walter?” said he; “go back and play. I don’t want you here.”

“O, *please*, Sydney,” said a pleading voice, as a pair of childish blue eyes were lifted up to the face of the elder boy, “I *do* want to see the water-mill! I won’t touch it—I promise.”



“You won’t get the chance,” said Sydney roughly. “Just you go back when you’re told. You’ve got Madge and Johnny to play with.”

“But Madge doesn’t make water-wheels, and I’m tired of her play, and Johnny is indoors. Do let me watch you, Sydney!”

But all Sydney’s answer was to take the little boy by the shoulders and march him back to the wall. He felt very angry.

“Now, look here, Walter,” he said, “in that elder-bush there lives a ghost that comes out sometimes. I think you’d better keep away from it, for you’re the sort of chap that would be caught.”



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[Illustration:]

Sydney, seeing the sudden fear in the child's face as he turned his eyes towards the elder-tree, thought he had hit on a very happy plan for keeping Walter away.

"I've given him a fright," said he, as he went back to where his sisters were sitting by the edge of the stream. "I've told him there's a ghost in that tree. He won't come past it in a hurry."

Loo laughed, but Lena said: "He'll really believe it, Sydney. He's such a nervous sort of a child."

"I want him to believe it," said Sydney. "He's such an inquisitive little chap that he'd have been coming down here to see my wheel when I wasn't about. I don't know what mother asked him for. He's a perfect nuisance."

"Mother wants us to be kind to him," said Lena; "you know she said so. Poor little thing! He hasn't got a mother, and he's always left with servants now."

"The best place for him," exclaimed Sydney. "Why should he bother us and spoil our holiday?"

"He's a stupid little thing," said Loo.

Lena was silent. "He's not like other children," she said, after a minute, "but how can he be? Mother says he has never had any jolly times or any children to play with."

"O, well," said Sydney carelessly, "he's got Madge and Johnny now, and that ought to be enough." And then he forgot all about Walter in the interest of fixing his wheel.

Meanwhile Walter went slowly back again through the garden, his heart full of bitter disappointment. He did so want to see that wheel! He had been dreaming about it all night, for he had known that it was to be fixed and tried the next day. He had been watching for an opportunity ever since Sydney and his sisters had gone to the stream. It came when nurse went indoors with Johnny, and Madge got sulky and buried herself in a picture-book. That was the moment when he stole away unobserved. If only he could have had one peep! He wouldn't have touched it, not for the world; he only wanted to look at the wonderful thing, and to see if he could perhaps make one some day. He would like to try now, but he was not allowed to have a knife, and he did not know where to get wood. Then when he went home there would be no stream and no new sorts of play.

Just then he heard Madge calling him.



“Come here and play, Walter,” she said. “I’ll be a bear among the trees and I’ll run out and catch you.”

“I don’t like that game, Madge,” said he; “you roar so loud and then I think it really is a bear.”

“You baby!” said she. “Well, Johnny and nurse will play and you can run away.”

No, he could not do that. He would play too, and try to remember all the time that it was only Madge roaring among the trees and not really a bear.

The next day it happened that there was a large picnic party, to which all the elders were invited, including Sydney, Loo, and Lena. So the three younger children, with nurse and Baby and the other servants, had it all to themselves. It was rather a dull day, Walter thought. He was thinking about the wheel and wondering if it was turning merrily in the stream, or if Sydney had put it away. He would have given worlds to go and see, but he never got the chance. When the children went to the kitchen garden it was to walk round with nurse.

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[Illustration:]

Johnny was bemoaning that strawberries were over, and Madge was looking vainly for gooseberries on the trees that had long ago been stripped. But Walter cast furtive glances at the thick elder-bush by the wall, and shivered a little inside when he thought of what Sydney had told him about it.

Directly after that they went indoors to have supper and go to bed. As they were undressing it was discovered that Madge had lost a coral necklace she had on. It was a fancy of her mother's that Madge should always wear this, as it was a present from a dead godmother, and the question now was where it had been dropped.

"She had it on at the gooseberry-bushes," said Walter, "for I saw it."

Nurse was just then undressing Johnny.

"You can run down the garden and look for it, Master Walter," said she. "It gets dark so fast I shan't be able to see by the time I've got you all in bed."

Madge was already in her dressing-gown, and in spite of much entreaty was not allowed to go.

So away went Walter full of importance, for the moment quite forgetting where he was going. But scarcely had he got outside the door when he remembered the dreadful tree, and fear took possession of him.

How could he go? He would have to pass the elder-bush if he went all round the path where they had walked with nurse. Dare he do it?

[Illustration:]

But if he went back the others would laugh at him and call him a baby. He could not stand that. He was not a baby, but a boy who would one day be a man and do great deeds. So he went on. Trying hard not to think of the elder-bush, Walter went bravely along, looking for the necklace. But still he could not help knowing that he was getting nearer to the dreaded spot. O, if he could but see those pink beads he would seize them and run!

He saw them at last, when he had nearly reached the tree. With mingled joy and fear he took a step forward and stopped to pick up the necklace when suddenly there was a rustling sound among the elder-branches and a hand reached out to part them, a hand belonging to a white figure. That was all Walter knew. With a cry of terror he rushed forward, not looking where he was going. Then he tripped and fell, and lay quite still. He was still unconscious when, an hour later, Sydney's mother bent over him anxiously.



He had struck his head on the stones bordering the path, and there was waiting till the doctor came to know the extent of the injury.

Nurse told how the little boy had gone to look for Madge's necklace, and cook explained how she had been gathering elder-berries to make wine and, hearing footsteps, had come out from the thick branches. Just as she saw Master Walter he gave a scream and ran away as if frightened. But what could have terrified him she could not think.

[Illustration:]

Sydney looked at his mother's distressed face and at the little figure lying on the bed. *He* knew what had made Walter afraid, and he did not like afterwards to think of what he felt during the half-hour before the doctor came.



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“But I never thought, mother,” said he, “that he would be frightened at *that*.”

His mother was too anxious to say much just then, and Sydney’s conscience spoke instead. “You did want to make him afraid,” it said, “knowing he was a small and timid boy.” And Sydney knew that this was the truth.

Walter got better after a time, and his little heart was made glad by the kindness of all around. Even Sydney came and worked beside him, explaining all the improvements and extensions of the water-wheel. But the little boy did not know all that was in Sydney’s mind, for it could not be spoken. But Sydney’s unspoken thought was the stirring of true manliness within him. It was the determination to remember that those who were not so strong and big as himself needed all the more his consideration and gentleness. And he did remember that all his life.

E. Dawson.

[Illustration: FISHING.]

A Frolic.

[Illustration:]

[Illustration:]

I knew you had come for a frolic, Wind,
The minute I heard you rise
And watched you blow the grey little clouds
To the fire in the sunset skies.

I saw you fly with a leap and a bound
To give the trees a fright.
What fun when they shivered, and tossed, and shook,
And the aspen leaves turned white!

O, how I wish I were you, wild Wind!
Then I’d have fun enough,
For nobody ever forbids *your* games
Or says they are rude and rough!

I’d whirl the clouds to the end of the skies,
And the ships as fast and far;
And I’d set the whole big world in a dance
And blow out every star!



I'd rock the houses and toss the trees.
How frightened the folks would be!
But the children and birds would know quite well
There was nothing to fear from me.

There would be no punishment-time to dread
At the end of this delight;
For they'd only say when the morning came:
"What a gale we had last night!"

E. Dawson.

Cousin Charlie's Visit.

[Illustration:]

"I have a surprise for you, dears," said mother, coming into the nursery one morning, followed by a bright-looking boy about ten years of age. "Here is your Cousin Charlie come to spend the day with you."

Dolly and May were delighted, and Mother said they might stay out all the morning. For the first hour they were very happy—there were so many new things to show Charlie; but he was one of those restless boys who get tired of everything very quickly.

"What shall we do next?" he kept saying. They tried hunting for eggs in the barn, but he soon called that "slow."

"Let's go and pick blackberries in the upper field," said little May.

So they started off and had only picked a very little while when Charlie suddenly asked: "Whose orchard is that just across the next field?"



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"It's Farmer Giles's," said Dolly.

"Let's climb over and get some apples," was his next idea.

Dolly and May opened their eyes very wide. "That would be stealing," they cried, both together.

"Nonsense," said Charlie. "That's just like girls—always afraid to do anything. I mean to get a pocketful, so you can wait till I come back."

They waited and waited such a long time, but he never came, so they went slowly home. It was nearly tea-time when nurse came and said: "Farmer Giles has brought Cousin Charlie back." And a very miserable-looking boy he was.

When he had filled his pockets and meant to come down, he saw Rover, the savage farm dog, waiting for him below; so he had to stay in the tree, and might have had to remain all night, only the farmer happened to ride by and heard the dog barking.

Dolly and May were very sorry for him, and their mother did not scold him as she meant to do, because, she said, "the fright had been punishment enough."

F. Clifton Bingham.

[Illustration: THE PICNIC PARTY.]

Dan's Picnic.

It was one of Dan's birthdays. He had had a party on the 1st of every month since the time that he was born, which happened to be New Year's Day. And if you asked Reggie and Flo they would tell you that Dan quite looked forward to his monthly parties, and, what is more, enjoyed them. You see, a whole year is a very long time. Boys and girls may grow to be old men and women and have lots of birthdays; but a doggie's life is comparatively short, so the more festivals they can squeeze into it the better.

Now, on this particular September 1st of which I am going to tell you, it was arranged that the milkman was to take Reggie and Flo and Dan home with him in his cart directly he had delivered the morning's milk, and bring them back again at tea-time. This he did: and how Reggie and Flo did enjoy themselves, to be sure!

[Illustration:]

The milkman had two little friends staying with him, named Reuben and Jane. Reuben led the way into the woods carrying a kettle and a box of tea-things; while Reggie and Jane and little Flo followed with buns and tarts. Dan was useful too, for he helped to gather sticks with which to boil the kettle. He played hide-and-seek with the children,



saw a real live rabbit for the first time in his life, and thought it was a new kind of cat; so in one way he had a very good time, but I am very sorry to tell you that the children quite forgot that Dan could not drink tea or eat jam tarts, and, as for buns, they knew he hated them. So poor Dan got nothing to eat at his own party. And when good-bye was said, and when the kind milkman dropped the three down on the steps—just like the milk-cans—Dan raised a feeble little “bow-wow” to Reggie’s mother, and said as plainly as a little doggie could: “O, missis, missis! It’s been *my* party and I’ve had nuffin’ to eat. All I got was an empty nut-shell—’bow-wow’—which somebody called a squirrel—’bow-wow’—dropped into my mouth—’bow-wow’—while I was looking up a tree—’bow-wow-wow!’”



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Reggie's mother must have understood, for she gave Dan a good supper, and he slept right soundly till morning.

Mary Boyle.

Bringing home the holly.

[Illustration:]

With hearts as light as snow-flakes fall,
With cheeks like sunset glow,
And ringing shouts of joy and fun,
Away the children go.

Away! to where the holly-tree,
With berries gleaming bright,
Stands like a shivering giant in
Its glistening cloak of white.

There's Roy, to take the sledge in hand
And pilot through the snow.
"The girls don't understand," he says.
(Just like a boy, you know!)

Then back they bring the loaded sledge,
With fingers pricked and sore.
But what care they? They'll go again
To-morrow for some more.

For children love the Christmas-time,
When everything is jolly;
And all must help to deck the house
In mistletoe and holly!

And then comes good St. Nicholas,
With loads of books and toys.
Yes, Christmas is the *dearest* time
For happy girls and boys.

Ellyn Hall.

[Illustration: BRINGING HOME THE HOLLY.]



THE DANDELION CHILDREN

[Illustration:]

“What little darlings we are!” said the children one day.

They were all sitting fluffed up into one little downy ball on the top of a long stem.

“It is very nearly time for us to go into the world,” said they. “O, how wide and how sunny it is, and what fun it will be! Our wings are all ready to fly, and we are so light and happy! Then the whole world will be ours, and we can choose our own place in which to take root and grow.

“I will grow in a lovely garden,” said one.

“I mean to be seen, wherever I am,” another declared.

“Well, there’s plenty of time before us to choose,” remarked a third.

But the mother dandelion shook her leaves and said: “Children, don’t boast. Others don’t always think as much of us as we do of ourselves!”

“O, but they must,” said the little ones; “we are darlings!”

“Very well,” said the wind. “Now you may go—puff!” And away flew some of the seeds, just as they do when you blow the dandelion “clocks.”

“Puff! puff!” away went the others—all but one.

“Let me stay here, wind,” she begged. “If I can grow as large and as beautiful as my mother I shall be content.” So the wind just loosened her gently, and down she dropped close to her mother’s side.

“You are a wise child,” said the field-mouse. “Under this hedge you will grow in peace. Neither scythe nor spade ever comes here. But you won’t be seen, and you won’t see the world like your brothers and sisters.”



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Meantime the others went dancing about in fine style. One of them, high up in the blue air, looked at the little white clouds and fancied himself seen by just as many eyes as they were. "Why, this is even better than I thought," said he. "I never fancied I should sail about the sky!"

After some long sunny days of travel he saw below him a beautiful garden all shut in with walls, in which roses and fruit-trees grew.

[Illustration:]

"This is the place for me!" he said, and down he went, and perched on the edge of the great drive in front of all the flower-beds and just before the windows of the house. "Nothing could suit me better!" said he. "I shall have plenty of good company, and I have found a very good place to make my home!" So he folded up his downy wings and quickly fell asleep.

Another of the winged children went skipping over the fields, stopping now and then to play with some flower, or just to bask in the sun. After a time she came to a sunny bank of grass on the side of the high-road.

"This is the place for me," she said. "Here I will live and grow, so that all who pass along this road will be certain to think how beautiful I am!"

And so she settled down among the grass, quite happy.

And a third said to herself: "It is good to be of some use in the world!" So when one day the breeze took her to the town, she stopped in a flower-pot full of earth that stood upon the dingy window-sill of a poor little house. "I shall be valued here," she said, "and the poor folks will think a lot of me for growing in such a place. After all, it's a fine thing to make people happy."

So she cuddled down in the flower-pot and went to sleep.

And all the other dandelion-children who had sat on the stem that day went dancing about, not knowing what they wanted. They played in the fields and never thought of anything else till one day the rain came and wet their wings and beat them down among the meadows just where they happened to be. But it was very comfortable in the deep grass, and so they just went to sleep too.

When they woke again, they all had roots and little leaves, and deep in their hearts the buds of flowers. For they had grown up now, and they were plants. At first they were all very small, but the sunshine gradually made them bigger and bigger and drew out the flowers folded in their hearts.



Then the one who had chosen the beautiful garden for his home proudly opened his first yellow flower and looked round to see what the other flowers thought of that.

But alas! he did not know how soon his pride was to have a fall. For the gardener came that way and stopped before him. "Drat these weeds!" said he. "How came this here?" Then, whipping out his knife, he stooped down, rooted up the poor dandelion, and threw it among a heap of weeds which were waiting to be wheeled away!

The one who had chosen the roadside bank fared no better, for scarcely had she opened her yellow flowers for everyone to see when a donkey came along. "Here's a juicy mouthful!" said he, and he stopped and ate her up—flowers, leaves, and all!



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The flower-pot on the window-sill which the third dandelion-child had made her home was taken inside one day, just when her flowers were ready to open.

[Illustration:]

"I must throw away this nasty weed," said a voice, "before I plant my seeds." Then some little round, black, ugly seeds were laid down carefully, while the dandelion was rooted up and flung away into a back yard down below.

This is a sad story, you see, but it is perfectly true.

The others who had skipped about the meadows grew among long grass now, which nearly choked them, and completely hid them from the sun. And when June came and the hay was cut, they too were cut and crushed before they had had any flowers at all.

But away in a corner, by a hedge—hidden from all eyes and sheltered from cold winds—the dandelion-child who had not wanted to go into the world grew stronger and more beautiful every day. She knew nothing about fine gardens or admiring eyes—and she cared nothing. All she knew was that the sun looked down on her with all his brightness, and that the great blue sky into which she was always gazing was wide enough and fair enough for her.

E.D.

Conceit Bowled Out!

[Illustration:]

He was a clever cricketer,
And very proud of that;
Conceitedly one afternoon
He took his cricket bat.
But when he at the wicket saw
His sister with her curls,
He turned his nose up so, and said:
"I never play with girls!

"They're molly-coddles all," he cried;
"They always spoil a match;
They cannot field or bowl a bit—
They cannot even catch!
However, just this once I'll play!"
O, pride had such a fall:
You should have heard them shout—a girl
Had bowled him out first ball!



C.B.

Laugh at It!

When you hear the merry rain
Patter at the window-pane,
Think 'twill soon be fine again;
So laugh at it!

If you chance to tumble down,
Though you bump your little crown,
Never cry or pout or frown,
Just laugh at it!

When the sum is hard to do,
Rub it out and try anew;
When you get the answer true
You'll laugh at it!

C.B.

[Illustration:]

The Dancing Academy

This is the way, on a rainy day,
We teach our dolls to dance—
The doll in blue, and the Scotchman true,
And Lady Belle from France.
It's heel and toe and it's to and fro,
They all can do it well;
But the best of all our pupils small
Is darling Lady Belle!



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They're very good, but they're only wood,
So they have to be shown
The step to take and the bow to make—
They cannot dance alone!
Quadrille, gavotte, and I don't know what,
They soon will clever be!
So, dolls who sigh to be dancers, try
Our Dolls' Academy!

C.B.

[Illustration:]

[Illustration: A JOLLY RIDE.]

A Visit to the Dale Farm

[Illustration:]

When Dorothy's and Oliver's father and mother had arranged to go abroad for six weeks, the question arose: "What shall we do with the children?" They had many aunts and uncles who would willingly take care of them, but their mother wanted them to be in the country; so, in the end, it was decided to send them with their nurse to stay at a farm, the mistress of which had once been a nurse to their mother, and who was sure to take good care of them.

There was a great deal of excitement and bustle, but at last all was ready, and the day came for them to say good-bye for a short time to their home. Their ponies had already been sent on, and the terrier Patch was to go with them.

Their mother was going with them, and their father saw them off at the station.

When they arrived at the Dale Farm there was a warm welcome for them. Their mother and her old nurse had a lot to talk about, and then they went into the quaint farm-parlour for tea, and how they all enjoyed the honey and cream and hot scones!

After tea they had to say good-bye to their mother, for she had to be driven back to the station.

The following morning the children were wakened by the crowing of the cocks and the cackling of the hens and other noises unfamiliar to them. After breakfast, they went on a tour of inspection round the farm places. They also went to greet their ponies, who seemed quite rejoiced to hear their voices in this strange land. Then they went to see Mrs. Farmer feed her poultry; and what a noise there was among the turkeys, and



geese, and ducks, and hens!—all so hungry for breakfast, and all pushing round without the slightest regard for good manners. After them there were the calves to feed. Six long-legged shaky little things—they wondered they could ever grow into anything to be afraid of. Before they had half finished looking round nurse called them to get ready for their ride.

Everything was different from what it was at home, for they were to take their rides without a groom, and across the common, a big place covered with short crisp grass, with occasional clumps of rushes and thistles; and here they could canter, or gallop, or race without fear of harm.

People and animals seemed to do as they liked on the common. Donkeys browsed sleepily, and when the children came near lifted their heads as if to say: “Who are these strangers? They’re not donkeys, so what do they want on our ground?”



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Then there were a lot of geese there. Patch thought he would have a bit of fun with the geese one day, so he set off to chase them. There was a great fluster and spreading of wings, and they waddled off a few yards; then they turned suddenly and faced him, stretching out their long necks and hissing, at which Patch turned tail and troubled them no more.

The village children on their way to and from school would linger on the common to chase butterflies or run races. Then the boys found it a capital place for playing at soldiers and leap-frog, and other things.

As it was June the farm people were busy in the hay, so of course Dorothy and Oliver helped. They raked and tossed and gathered it into heaps, and then they grew dreadfully hungry, so they sat under the hedge and ate *bread and cheese*, which they found was quite the correct lunch for haymakers. Patch sat with them and was having his share, when he suddenly began sniffing and snorting and scratching round a haycock. They thought there must be a rat about, but when they moved the hay they found a poor little creature with a brown plush coat and *no eyes!* Nurse told them it was a mole, so they put it in a box lined with cotton-wool and gave it lettuce to eat, but it only lived four days. I don't think it would like the most luxurious nest as well as a little hole in the ground.

It would take a long time to tell you about all the children saw and did during their visit to the Dale Farm: how they rode on the hay, then came jogging back in the empty cart for more; how they drove with the farmer in his spring-cart, which was not so very springy; how they learned to milk, and quite got over their fear of cows. Altogether they had such a delightful time that they hope they may go again next year.

When the letter came to say the ship had arrived bringing back their father and mother they were of course delighted, but they were quite sorry to have to say good-bye to all their farm friends, animals as well as people.

So the children went back to their city home, and when their father and mother heard all their accounts of the good time they had had, and saw their tanned and rosy cheeks, they said: "O, you must go again next year."

Ellyn Hall.

[Illustration: A GOOD KICK.]

The Worst Pupil

When Betty kept a school one day,
Her sister was so good;



The dollies every one behaved
As well-taught dollies should;

But Tom was such a noisy boy
She had to get the cane;
The very sight gave him a fright
And made him good again!

C.B.

[Illustration:]

The Tea Party



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Little Miss Betty has had a tea-party,
Everyone came with an appetite hearty;
Animals, dollies, and toys were invited;
Bobby was good and our Baby delighted.
Of cake, bread-and-butter, and milk they had plenty—
The cups were so tiny that Bobby drank twenty;
And when it was over they ran and asked mother
If they might to-morrow have just such another!—C.B.

[Illustration:]

A Scratch Team.

[Illustration:]

[Illustration:]

“That’s a wide!” said Tom, as the ball went rolling by about a yard from the stump.
“Throw it up, Maggie. Now, Hugh, try again!”

It was a very young and inexperienced team that Tom Gardner was instructing. Tom was staying with his Aunt Gertrude, and had been complaining to her that he had no one whom he could play cricket with.

“Why don’t you play with the children?” asked his aunt at last.

“Play with the kids?” gasped Tom. “Why, auntie, they are all girls except Hugh, and he not even in knickerbockers! And they don’t know how!”

“Well, can’t you teach them?” his aunt asked. Tom looked at her with some surprise. He was very fond of her and would do much to please her, but this seemed rather unreasonable.

“I—I have only a bat,” he murmured? “there aren’t any stumps!”

“O, I’ll soon make you some stumps,” said the lady briskly. “Come out into the garden and I’ll soon get them.”

She was as good as her word. In a few minutes she had found three sticks, pointed the ends with her pocket-knife, and driven them in with the gardener’s mallet on the lower lawn. A flower-pot was placed on the centre stick. Then she produced a ball from her pocket.

“Now,” she said, “you have everything you will want, and I leave you to teach your scratch team.”



Tom laughed. The phrase “your scratch team” pleased him. His aunt’s energy had infected him, and he began to marshal his forces.

“Now, look here, girls,” he said; “Maggie, you’re wicket-keeper, and Fan and Kitty must field, and Hugh shall bowl.”

But Hugh proved such an indifferent bowler that even the girls began to clamour.

“Let me twy, Cousin Tom,” cried Maggie; “I can frow better than Hugh!”

“You frow!” laughed Tom; “why, you can’t speak properly yet!”

“Let me twy,” said Maggie; “I don’t bowl with my tongue!”

[Illustration: A SCRATCH TEAM.]

[Illustration:]

So Maggie tried, and the game began to get exciting.

Maggie couldn’t say her “r’s,” but she could certainly throw a ball very straight, and Tom had to play his best.

He began to hit the ball about the lawn, so that the little fielders grew hot and out of breath. At last one vigorous toss absolutely hit the wicket and sent the stumps and the flower-pot sprawling.

“I have knocked him out,” cried Maggie, jumping about in her glee. “I am going to bat the ball now!”



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But at that moment a voice was heard calling: “Come in to tea, children!”

“It can’t be tea-time yet, surely!” said Tom, quite astonished at the quick flight of time.

So the scratch team had not played so badly after all, and during Tom’s stay with his aunt they had many a game together and always thoroughly enjoyed it.

M.A. Hoyer.

Roddy’s Victory

[Illustration:]

[Illustration:]

It was Saturday—a summer Saturday; the sun shone down upon the meads and pastures round Clover Farm so radiantly that every face felt bound to smile brightly in return. Every face but one, and that belonged to Roddy Lester, the eldest of the farmer’s four.

“What ails my boy this fine sunshiny morning?” called out mother from the cool, sweet dimness of the dairy, where she was at work.

Roddy did not answer. He was standing in the ivy-encircled doorway of the dairy, his hands deep in his pockets, his feet shuffling to and fro, and on his face a dark, angry cloud.

“Come, Roddy, tell mother the trouble. Is it anything to do with school? Is there a punishment preparation to be done this morning?”

“No; there isn’t!” Roddy roused himself at such a suspicion. “Why, mother, I told you I was moved up yesterday; don’t you remember? But I’ll come inside and tell you all about it.”

“No! Tell me from outside all about it.”

“Well, then, mother, I don’t *want* to take the children to the meads. I want to amuse myself. And it’s not fair. Saturday’s a holiday, and it’s my right to have it!” sullenly said Roddy.

“Your right! Perhaps so, dear! But sometimes it is our privilege to yield our rights!” quietly said mother, taking her eyes for a second off the yellowing cream to glance at the boy’s gloomy face. “Who told you to take the children to the meads—father?” she asked.



“Yes, it was. He said I was to take them to the cowslip meads, and not to stir from there until he came back from market.”

“And what is it you want to do instead?”

“I want to go with my net down to Butterfly Corner. There will be heaps of butterflies out this sunny day. And the other boys at school are all collecting: they have more than I have, all of them. I have only a tortoiseshell and a brimstone. O, it’s a regular shame of father!”

“Hush, dear, hush! Nothing that your kind, good father says or does can be called a shame. But I believe I can guess why he gave those orders. He knew that this is an over-busy day for me, and also that I have one of my bad headaches.” Certainly mother’s face gleamed out white from the dairy shadows. “And as this is market-day at Hamley Town he and old Michael would be away until dinner-time. So, you see, sonny, he has left *you* in charge. You are in father’s place this morning to guard the farm and us all, particularly the tinies. Don’t you see what an honour it is to be trusted thus?”



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Something stirred in Roddy's heart at his mother's words. The best part of him suddenly came uppermost. He walked quietly away, followed by Fuzzy sniffing at his heels. And, somehow, the boy felt an inch taller as he looked round the farm. After all, what were the butterflies compared with the tinies left in his charge? "Hip, hip, hooray!" Roddy straightened himself and cheered. He had won a victory—over himself.

[Illustration:]

"Hi, Nettie! Hi, Dumps! Come along! And where's Baby? We're going to the meads, and I'll make you a fine cowslip ball to shoot the rooks with!" he shouted, and Fuzzy barked madly round as the tinies flocked out.

When they got there, what with the sun and the wind, the making of the huge cowslip ball and the little ones' joy over it, Roddy's face cleared up and was as sunshiny as the weather itself. There's nothing like giving up your own will for making the heart sing.

By-and-by, when dinner-time came, so did father. As the dog-cart drove along the high-road, Roddy and Nettie puzzled over its appearance.

"It's got a new wheel at the back, Roddy!"

But Roddy's eyes widened into a fixed stare, and his face grew very red.

"Well, boy, here you are at your post. Now I'll tell you why I wanted you to stay at home this morning. It was for this surprise. Look, my lad! For weeks back I've been in treaty for this bicycle for you. To-day I was able to close with the bargain, and it's yours!"

For a few seconds Roddy could not see: his eyes were dimmed. The good, kind father had been planning out his boy's pleasure! "O, father!" he gasped; then, "O, mother!"

"Such a beauty!" delightedly said mother.

"It's a good one; I don't know the name," father was beginning.

"I do!" put in mother. "It is the 'Victory'—Roddy's Victory!"

M.B. Manwell.

Was It a Dream?

[Illustration:]

Rita grew quite tired of gathering wildflowers while her brother Frank sat by the water busy with his fishing-rod.



“He *must* be tired of it by this time! He has been fishing for two hours!” she said, and, swinging her bunch of flowers, she walked to where her brother was sitting.

“Do leave off fishing for a while, Frank!” she pleaded, leaning against the tree beside him. “There is such a funny-looking animal running about over there in the grass. Come and look!”

Frank laughed.

“I know your funny-looking animals, Rita!” he said.

“Aren’t you really tired of sitting quite still?” went on Rita wonderingly.

“I don’t think about it,” answered her brother. “I want to catch the fish, and to do that I must sit still.”

Rita knew she must be contented to wait, so she walked a little way from him and threw herself down upon the bank.

As she lay looking into the water she suddenly felt herself grow very sleepy. A little while after, the water began to get so clear that she could see right through it. It grew more and more so until it became just like glass. Rita could see the very bottom of the pond and the fish swimming quickly backwards and forwards.



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Then she heard some very funny little voices coming up from the water. This made her look closer, and she soon discovered a small group of fishes who seemed to be speaking very eagerly together. She saw they were gathered round Frank's line, on the end of which hung a tempting piece of bait.

"I tell you, my son," Rita heard the largest fish say to one of the smaller ones, "that is a trap. I have seen hundreds of poor fishes try to swallow that worm, and they have been pulled up out of the water and I have never seen them any more!"

"But, mother!" cried the smaller fish, "if I only had just one bite! Look what a beauty it is! I am sure there can be nothing to harm me!"

"Inside that worm," continued, the big fish, "there is a hook which will catch into your gills, and you will not be able to get away. Then the man at the top will pull you up and up, and you will be killed and eaten by him!"

Still the little fish looked longingly at the bait. Rita wanted to call out and tell him what his mother said was quite true; but somehow her voice refused to come.

The other fishes who were gathered round listening did not say anything, but Rita saw that some of the smaller ones looked at the worm just as longingly as the little one who had spoken.

For a few minutes there was silence in the water; then all at once, at a moment when it thought its mother was looking the other way, the little fish made a dart forward and tried to swallow the bait. The next moment it was wriggling about in a most pitiable manner and giving faint little cries for help. Its mother swam towards it in great distress.

"Come and help!" she called, in a trembling voice.

All the other fishes surrounded the line, and some caught hold of the little fish's tail and held on.

Just as Rita was getting very excited indeed she gave a great start and jumped up from the bank.

"What was that?" she exclaimed aloud.

"Why, I've got a splendid catch. It must be a monster! The line is so heavy I can hardly pull it in!"

It was Frank's voice. Rita suddenly remembered where she was and that she must have fallen asleep. She walked slowly to Frank, thinking about her strange dream.



She had only stood by him a minute when—splash!—out flew the line from the water and over went Frank on his back.

It was so funny that Rita could not help laughing heartily—especially as Frank was not at all hurt.

“It’s all very well for you to laugh!” he said, when he had got up again; “but that was the best catch I’ve ever had, and the wretched fish must have got off the hook!”

Rita grew very thoughtful. Could her dream have been true? It really did seem strange. Anyway, although she felt sorry for Frank, she could not help feeling very pleased that the poor little fish had got free!

Edith Roberts.



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Merry Folk.

[Illustration:]

Merry folk tiny, merry folk tall,
Happy as can be, here they are all,
Spending the holidays 'midst the flowers,
Laughing away the joyous hours!

Merry folk sunny, merry folk sweet,
Pleasant to look at, happy to meet,
Nothing but smiling, never a sigh,
They are so glad to be here, that's why!

Merry girls dancing under the trees,
With their curls floating out on the breeze,
Merry boys playing all the day through,
Here you will find them waiting for you.

[Illustration:]

Why are they merry? I'll tell you why:
They know you will see them by-and-by;
They know that you all are going to look
At them in this merry picture-book.

[Illustration: TOBOGGANING.]

Auntie's Tea-Tray.

[Illustration:]

"Auntie dear, will you buy Molly and me a toboggan? There's such a lovely slide on Heath Hill, and Toddy Graham and the Earles have toboggans, and we want one too."

Auntie looked up from her sewing and shook her head. "No, my dears, I can't. Run out and play with your hoops instead," she said, and then she went on with her work.

Charlie was angry. "I'm ever so much bigger than Toddy Graham," he said indignantly, "and his mother lets him have a toboggan. It's a shame! But never mind, Molly; we'll go all the same. I've got an idea. You go to the hill and I'll come presently."

Molly trotted away, and in a minute or two Charlie came running towards her, carrying his auntie's best tea-tray. "I had an awful bother to get it," he said. "Jane saw me with



the old one and took it away; but I remembered this one was upstairs in auntie's room, so I fetched it without anyone seeing me."

"But what's the good of a tea-tray?" asked Molly.

"Toboggan, you silly; come along," Charlie answered shortly; and in another minute the two children were spinning away down the hill.

The first journey was most successful, but on the second. Charlie forgot that a tea-tray requires careful management and good steering, and half-way down the hill he came into collision with Toddy Graham.

Over went the tray, smash came Toddy's toboggan right on the top of it, and all three' children were shot out into the snow. Toddy and Charlie picked themselves up, but Molly lay without moving.

"She's dead, Toddy Graham. O, what shall I do?" wailed poor frightened Charlie.

"You'd better fetch your aunt," suggested practical Toddy; and Charlie rushed off as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

When auntie arrived upon the scene, she found her small niece sitting up, howling vigorously, and rubbing a very big bump on her forehead. There was no great harm done—at least, as far as the children were concerned, but the best tea-tray was battered and scratched beyond recognition.

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“Really, auntie did behave like a brick,” said Charlie, and when they opened their money-boxes and, putting all their pennies and sixpences together, bought her a new tea-tray, she declared it was ever so much better than the one they had spoilt.

And what do you think happened when Christmas Day came? Why, auntie gave them the jolliest toboggan you ever saw, and the children found out that she had meant to do so all along, and that was why she had refused to give them one when they first asked for it. Wasn't she a nice aunt?

L.L. Weedon.

[Illustration:]