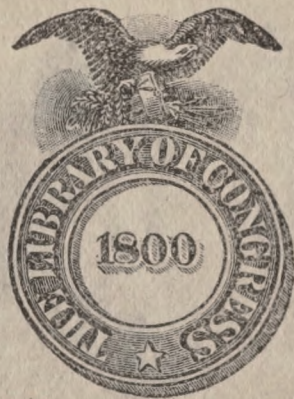


# Betty Barker

A Little Girl with a Big Heart



Janet Thomas Van Osdel



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**BETTY BARKER**

**A Little Girl with a Big Heart**







"THEY ATE THEIR BREAKFAST WITH BRIGHT-EYED, FURRY AND FEATHERY CREATURES WATCHING FROM THE GREEN TREES AND BUSHES."—  
Page 27.



# BETTY BARKER

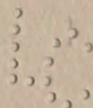
*A LITTLE GIRL WITH  
A BIG HEART*

By  
JANET THOMAS VAN OSDEL

ILLUSTRATED BY  
ANTOINETTE INGLIS



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Betty Barker

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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BETTY'S NOTIONS . . . . .	9
II. ASKING QUESTIONS . . . . .	16
III. QUEER NEEDLES . . . . .	25
IV. WHO WAS HOMESICK ? . . . . .	33
V. THE PROUD CAKE . . . . .	42
VI. HORSES AND HORSES . . . . .	50
VII. BETTY MISSES HER LESSON . . . . .	58
VIII. 'FRAIDY CAT ! . . . . .	63
IX. BETTY FINDS A PET . . . . .	70
X. THE PINK-EYED COOKY BOY . . . . .	81
XI. ADA'S TURN . . . . .	91
XII. A " NIMPOSSIBLE " CHILD . . . . .	100
XIII. BETTY AND ADA GO OUT TO LUNCH . . . . .	108
XIV. ADA FINDS A NEW HOME . . . . .	118
XV. BETTY MAKES A VISIT . . . . .	127
XVI. A FAIRY GRANTS THREE WISHES . . . . .	134



## ILLUSTRATIONS

They ate their breakfast with bright-eyed furry and feathery creatures watching from the green trees and bushes (Page 27)	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
		FACING PAGE	
“ Why, Aunt Martha, I’m not sleeping ! ”	.	.	46
“ You can’t move even the littlest bit, can you, dearie ? ”	.	.	72
Together she and Ada dragged in the tree	.	.	98
The Sparkling Lady drew Betty to her	.	.	106
“ Fairy, fairy, I wish for this pony ! ”	.	.	140



# Betty Barker

A Little Girl With a Big Heart

## CHAPTER I

### BETTY'S NOTIONS

“**N**OW sit down and eat your oatmeal,” said Aunt Martha to Betty one morning when she had charge of the house because Betty’s mother was at the hospital. “Eat it whether you like it or not! You surely have notions!”

Betty did not like oatmeal, but she ate it now because her mother had told her she was to mind Aunt Martha. While she was eating it she wondered what notions had to do with it.

“I want to wear my plaid dress to school to-day, Aunt Martha,” said Betty when she had finished her breakfast. “It’s the fruit

shower for teacher and 'most everybody wears best dresses for showers!"

"That's the first I ever heard of folks dressing up for showers! You just put on your old serge dress. A fruit shower or any other kind of a shower is exactly the reason for wearing the oldest clothes you've got. What if some of the fruit stains got on your plaid silk and you had to show them to your mother when she got home? You've got to get rid of your notions."

"What's notions?" asked Betty.

"Something folks oughtn't to have and the quicker they get rid of them the better," replied Aunt Martha. "Now get your apples from the cellar or you'll be late for school."

"Mother never said I had 'em, and Aunt Martha won't tell a child a single thing!" whispered Betty to herself, as she hung over the edge of the apple-barrel, trying to find the



biggest and reddest apples. "Maybe I got 'em since she went to the hospital. Maybe they're like measles and they're catching and I oughtn't go to school to-day. And I want to go on 'count of the shower to Miss Blake even if I do have to wear this old red dress!"

"Aunt Martha, ought I go to school if I've got notions?" she called on her way past the kitchen door.

"Ought she to go to school if she's got notions!" remarked Aunt Martha looking up at the ceiling. "What possesses the child? You run along as fast as ever you can, Betty Barker, or you'll be late again!"

"I'm surely glad her mother's coming back so soon," said Aunt Martha to herself as she watched Betty in her red serge and red stockings skipping down the path. "I'm willing enough to do the work, but Betty's questions are too much for me!"

"I've got notions," Betty told her friend Ada at recess.

"What's them?" asked Ada.

Betty shook her head.

"I don't know 'xactly, but Aunt Martha says I shouldn't have 'em and I got to get rid of 'em. That's what the doctor said about my tonsils, and then he cut them out."

Tears of sympathy for herself filled Betty's brown eyes. Then she added honestly, "But it didn't hurt hardly a speck."

"Does these hurt?" asked Ada.

"I don't know where they are, so I can't tell," replied Betty. "But I don't think it will matter if you play with me. Tonsils didn't catch, and maybe notions are more like tonsils than measles, 'cause you got to get rid of notions, too."

On the way home from school Betty stopped in at her grandfather's carpenter shop. She

picked up the long, clean shavings lying about and hung them over her shoulder, pretending she had long golden curls instead of straight black hair.

In a corner of the shop was a pile of boxes on which were printed big black letters—the kind that Betty found it easy to read. She named one after the other and her grandfather told her the word they made. Then she came to two words she knew.

“B-o-x, box!” she spelled. “I knew that word my own self, Grandpa!”

“You’ll soon know as much as your granddad!” he cried.

“O-f, of!” sang out Betty.

“My, O my!” said grandfather.

“N-o-t-i-o-n-s! What does that spell, Grandpa?”

“Notions,” answered Grandpa.

“*Notions!*” cried Betty. “Ought you to

have 'em, Grandpa? Aunt Martha says folks shouldn't have 'em, and if they have they must get rid of 'em quick as they can."

"Shouldn't have what?" asked Grandpa, putting down his plane to catch Betty up in his arms.

"Notions. What is notions, Grandpa, and why are they so bad?"

"We'll take a look at these notions right now, and let's hope they're not bad because they have to be used to-morrow," said Grandpa.

Betty held her breath while the box was being pried open, but when the cover came off all she saw was some knobs and cord and hooks.

"You see, honey, it's just a lot of odds and ends to be used about the new house I'm putting up," explained Grandpa. "To save listing and sending a lot of little things separately, they bunch them together and mark the box, 'Notions.' In a store you'd find needles, pins,

thread, and such things all bunched together on a counter they call the 'notion' counter."

Betty looked puzzled.

"But I haven't needles or pins or knobs, and Aunt Martha says I've got notions and I've got to get rid of 'em."

Grandfather laughed.

"What Aunt Martha meant was that you have some ideas of your own that she can't understand. If she could understand them and they agreed with her way of thinking she'd probably call them ideas instead of notions. Now let's go up to the house. I have an idea that maybe there's somebody there you'd like to see!"

"Oh, is it Mother?" whispered Betty, too happy to talk out loud.

Grandpa nodded and they started for the house.

## CHAPTER II

### ASKING QUESTIONS

**B**ETTY had only one little peep at her mother and a long, long kiss. Then she had to go out of the room because her mother was still very weak. It would be days before she could see Betty for more than a few minutes at a time and those minutes had to be such quiet ones!

To make things more lonesome, Grandpa had gone away for a couple of weeks.

Betty sat on the back steps wishing that her mother would hurry and get all well and that Grandpa would come home and never go away again. She wanted somebody around who would tell her everything she wished to know. Mother and Grandpa did that. Aunts were different. She had asked Aunt Martha only

a few questions and then Aunt Martha had said, "Betty Barker, if you ask one more question, first thing you know you'll turn into a Question-Mark Girl!"

"What's a Question-Mark Girl?" asked Betty.

To show Betty Aunt Martha drew a Question-Mark Girl just like this:



"Is the dot ——?" began Betty.

"S-sh!" said Aunt Martha. "Now you go outdoors and don't ask another question, no

matter what comes up. A girl as big as you should find out things for herself."

All Betty had been going to ask was whether the dot was a foot, and would she have only one foot if she did turn into a Question-Mark Girl, and couldn't she ever run or jump again if she did have only one foot?

Very well!

She'd *never* ask Aunt Martha another question!

Maybe she'd never ask anybody another question as long as she lived!

"Want to sell that carpet?"

Betty jumped with surprise, but it was only the ragged ragman.

"What carpet?" asked Betty, looking at his poor bony brown horse and wishing she dared go into the kitchen and get some sugar to give him. Then she remembered and glanced down at her feet. There were still two of them.



“The one you’re leaning up against,” replied the man, taking off an old felt hat and wiping his forehead with a red handkerchief.

Betty turned around and saw a big roll of carpet on the steps behind her.

“Maybe that there’s for me,” said the ragman. “Sometimes your ma does set out rags so’s I kin pick ’em up when I come along.”

“Mother’s too sick to set things out,” replied Betty. “Maybe Aunt Martha did. I’ll ask her.”

Betty took three hops toward the kitchen door and then stopped short.

She would *not* ask Aunt Martha!

She’d show her that she didn’t have to ask anybody questions and perhaps she could make a lot of money besides.

She turned back and said to the man, “You can have the carpet for a nickel.”

The ragman did not say that was too much,

as Betty was afraid he might. He gave her a nickel, rolled the carpet down to his old wagon and drove the bony horse off in a hurry.

Betty wanted to ask Aunt Martha whether she might go to town to spend the money, but since she wasn't asking questions she went without permission. She bought a penny's worth of pink peppermints for Grandpa and a penny chocolate for her mother. Then she bought three all-day suckers for herself. If Aunt Martha hadn't been so particular about children's asking questions she might have bought her a candy banana.

The next week Betty's mother came downstairs.

Betty danced about happily. There were so many things she wanted to know. She especially wanted to know why Pearly, the colored man and her good friend, had stopped

coming in each day to do some of the chores for Aunt Martha.

“Where is ——?” began Betty, when her mother, in a pale blue wrapper with her hair in two long golden braids, was seated in the big chair with pillows all around her.

Then Betty remembered the Question-Mark Girl and said instead, “I haven’t seen Pearly here this whole week, Mother.”

“Aunt Martha sent him away,” said Mrs. Barker, stroking the little girl’s dark hair with her thin white hand. “She says he isn’t honest.”

“What makes —— Pearly is honest, Mother! He’s honestest than anybody I know!”

“I’ve thought he was, too, Betty,” agreed her mother, smiling. “But the carpet *is* gone —my best up-stairs carpet! And Pearly *did* ask Aunt Martha how much a carpet would

cost, and he took this one up for her. And he *is* going to be married as soon as he can furnish a house."

"Maybe Pearly didn't take the carpet," said Betty in a small voice, wriggling her red-stockinged legs about uncomfortably.

"That's what I hope," answered her mother.

"And he didn't, Mother! Truly he didn't!"

Mrs. Barker looked keenly at her little daughter.

Betty decided that she must risk everything for Pearly's sake and ask one question. If she did change to a Question-Mark Girl on account of that—well, she'd just have to stand it!

So she asked, "If you cross-your-heart knew that Pearly didn't take that carpet could he come back here to work and get married? Nobody would marry him if he stole carpets, would they, Mother?"

"Indeed he could come back!" replied her

mother. "Pearly is too good a worker for anybody to give him up without good reason."

"Well, then he didn't, Mother! I did! I didn't 'xactly take it, neither, but I let the ragman take it and he gave me a whole nickel for it. You could have it now only I spent it. And I got pink peppermints to give Grandpa when he came home and a chocolate for you when you got well, but that got squashy and I had to eat it. Aunt Martha said if I asked her a single more question I'd turn into a Question-Mark Girl, and so I didn't ask about the carpet. I thought things for myself."

"A Question-Mark Girl! What are you talking about?"

"This is her picture," said Betty, and pulled from her pocket a dirty piece of paper on which was Aunt Martha's Question-Mark Girl.

Mrs. Barker studied it with a frown, then she crumpled up the paper and tossed it aside.

“It’s quite time I was getting back to my Betty girl,” she said. “There must be a thousand things she wants to know if she hasn’t asked a question for more than a week. There’s never any danger in asking Mother questions, darling. She understands that you must ask them if you are to grow into a wise woman. And the question you did not ask cost Mother twenty dollars.”

“Oh, Mother!” cried Betty, the tears filling her eyes.

“But we’ll forget about that,” whispered Mother. “Now how would you like to go over to Pearly’s house and tell him to come back to work to-morrow? And you may tell him that he’ll be paid for last week the same as though he’d been here.”

## CHAPTER III

### QUEER NEEDLES

**M**RS. BARKER was still far from strong when Betty's school closed for the summer vacation, so Dr. Henderson said that she should take Betty and get away from everything for a while.

“That means that you and Betty and Grandpa will go away up in the wilds to our little lodge,” said Mr. Barker. “That's where you'll get away from everything. The pines and the hills will finish your cure. Martha can take care of me all right.”

So Betty and her mother and Grandpa rode on the train as far as it would take them. Then they got out of the train and into a wagon that was waiting for them, and again

they rode for miles and miles. Just when Betty was about to ask Grandpa whether her bones were broken because they hurt her so from riding so long over the rough roads, he cried, "Here we are at last!"

"Are we here? I don't see any wilds or lodge!" said Betty.

"We've been in the wilds for hours, dear heart," explained Grandpa. "That is what we call the woods and the hills and everything outdoors here because it is so wild and so far away from people. And the lodge is the little log hut right over there. I built it years ago when your mother wasn't as old as you are now, Betty."

That night they slept in queer beds. To Betty they seemed nothing but wooden benches nailed up against the wall and filled with sweet-smelling hay. There was only a curtain of skin to separate the two rooms of the lodge.



In the morning Grandfather built a fire outdoors and fried bacon and boiled coffee over it. They ate their breakfast with bright-eyed furry and feathery creatures watching from the green trees and bushes sparkling with dew in the morning sunshine. There was the singing and the calling of birds all about them.

“This is peace,” said Mrs. Barker with a happy sigh. And it made Betty happy to see her mother happy.

“The smell of the pines put me to sleep and kept me asleep,” Mrs. Barker went on. “I don’t know when I’ve slept as I did last night. And I’m so hungry! Mayn’t I have another slice of bacon and an egg, Father?”

After breakfast, when the dew had dried, Betty began to run about until she caught her foot in the tangled grass and fell. Her stocking was torn and her knee skinned so that it bled.

It was not until Mrs. Barker went to get Betty a fresh pair of stockings to take the place of her torn ones that she discovered she had not put any in the trunk.

“I suppose the only thing we can do about it is to mend these torn ones,” she said.

But when she took out her bag to find a needle and some cotton, there were no needles!

“Why, Betty, I told you to bring the needle-case just as I was finishing packing! How could you be so careless?”

Betty hung her head. She had been on her way to say good-bye to Ada when her mother had spoken to her, and instead of obeying at once she had gone on to Ada's. By the time she came back she had forgotten about the needles.

“We're in a terrible predicament,” continued Mrs. Barker, speaking to Grandpa. “It will be two weeks at the earliest before we can

get any supplies up here. And the Smith-Calvins are to stop here on their northern trip. They're the only folks we'll see all the time we're here and to have things wrong then! If it were anybody but Sibyl Smith-Calvin to see my child in such a plight I wouldn't mind!"

"My dear daughter, wouldn't it be better for Sibyl to see Betty in rags than for you to make yourself sick over it? Why, I've seen Sibyl with worse than torn stockings on when you two youngsters played together about my shop! Now, I want you to lie down here under these pines and forget all about every trouble under the sun. Betty and I'll wander about a little, but not far enough away so as to be out of hearing of your bell if you should ring."

"If it wasn't for the mosquitoes I'd cut them off and make socks of them," went on Mrs. Barker. "That would be better than holes,

but I don't dare do it. She's badly enough bitten as it is."

"I wouldn't mind a speck being more bitten, Mother, if you'd like that," said Betty.

"Daughter, dear, lie down as I tell you," urged Grandfather. "In another hour, after you've had a good nap, this annoyance will be shrunk down to its proper proportions. There's always a way out of everything."

Betty was not happy as she trotted along beside Grandpa, clinging tightly to his hand. She had been careless and now her mother was worrying and that would make her ill. Grandfather was quiet and thoughtful, too.

They picked their way through the underbrush and long grass until they came to an opening in the woods through which they saw a little blue lake sparkling in the sunshine. On the hills beyond the lake they saw a deer grazing.

“ Oh, Grandpa, look! ” cried Betty, forgetting to be sorry and jumping up and down in delight.

“ Ouch! ” she cried, suddenly stopping her jumping.

“ What is it, sweetheart? ” asked Grandpa.

“ Something’s sticking my foot! Oh! Ouch! ”

Grandpa picked Betty up in alarm.

As he did so he heard a soft rustle in the underbrush. He parted it and looked into it. There he saw a queer little fellow covered with long hairs and quills trying to steal quietly away.

“ That’s the fellow that pricked you, honey! ” exclaimed Grandpa. “ When you jumped up and down you struck him with your foot and he put out his quills. And if those quills aren’t in your shoe right now! Does your foot hurt, Betty? ”

“Not much any more,” answered Betty. “Look, Grandpa, aren’t his feathers like darning-needles?”

“They are, Betty!” cried Grandpa. “These are as sharp as a needle and as smooth. I’ll punch an eye through the thick end and there we have the darning-needle your mother’s been wishing for!”

“Wasn’t he good to give me two of his feathers for darning-needles?” asked Betty.

“What he really was doing, Betty, was trying to protect himself,” explained Grandpa. “When Mr. Porcupine thinks he is in danger he shoots out his quills so as to hurt and frighten away whatever is threatening him.”

“Anyhow, Mrs. Smith-Calvin won’t see me in such a plight now. What is ‘such a plight,’ Grandpa?”

## CHAPTER IV

### WHO WAS HOMESICK?

**A**T last the pines and the hills, the blue sky and the long days and nights of rest did their work for Betty's mother. The roses came back to her white face, her blue eyes began to sparkle and day by day she became stronger. Then they decided to go home.

They had been there only a week when Betty called for the mail one day and the girl at the post-office window gave her a post-card addressed to Miss Betty Barker.

Of course "Miss Betty Barker" could be no one but her very own self.

So she sat down on the sidewalk and spelled out the words which were written in such a

plain round hand that even a little girl who had just finished first grade could read them. This is what Aunt Sue had written:

“DEAR BETTY BARKER:

“Do you know of any little girl about six years old who would like to go away on a visit? If you do, tell her to come just as fast as ever she can to

“Your loving  
“AUNT SUE.”

Did Betty Barker know of such a girl?

Her shining Mary Jane pumps twinkled home and up to the house to Mother as fast as Betty could make them.

“But there’s no one to go with you now, dear, and you’d be sure to get homesick by yourself!” said Mrs. Barker when she read Aunt Sue’s post-card.

Betty’s dark eyes filled with tears.

“But I been away lots, Mother—all the time in the wilds!” she said.



“But that was with Mother and Grandpa along. Of course you wouldn't get homesick with either of us along. But going to Aunt Sue's all by yourself would be an altogether different matter, and if you did get homesick she'd have a terrible time with you. She should have written to me instead of asking you and then you wouldn't have been so disappointed.”

“Then I couldn't have gone, and Aunt Sue wants me awful bad,” said Betty.

“Let her try it,” said Mr. Barker when he came home to find a disappointed little daughter. “Perhaps when she knows how it feels to be really homesick she won't want to try it again. She'll have to learn by experience.”

“I like to learn by 'sperance,” said Betty, smiling happily.

Then she scampered off to pack her small suit-case with all her best clothes and some of her second-best, but none of her very oldest.

The next day Grandpa put her on the train and kissed her more times than Betty could count.

“And I won’t get homesick!” she told him. “How could I get homesick when I’m going to such a nawful lovely place?”

Aunt Sue lived only thirty miles away, but the ride seemed a very long one because it had to be taken in the milk-train, which stopped for a long while at every little station to take on milk-cans. It was a delightful ride to Betty, but at last it came to an end, and the fat conductor with kind blue eyes and a red face, lifted her off at her station.

There was Uncle Bob waiting for her! He made big eyes at her and held up his hands as though it was a great surprise to see her, and said, “Bless my blue blouse buttons! Who might this fine young lady be? Seems to me like I’ve seen her somewhere before. If I

were dead sure about it I might give her a ride, but I'd hate like poison to ask a strange young lady, dressed up all so fine, to ride with me!"

Betty giggled.

"It's me, Uncle Bob!" she said.

"Why, to be sure!" cried Uncle Bob. "It is ME! I see that plain enough now. Well, Miss Me, you may have a ride if you're going up our way."

"Oh, Uncle Bob, it's Betty Barker!" exclaimed Betty.

"Betty Barker! Why, that's some different. Come to think of it, Aunt Sue did tell me to come over and see if they put her off the train. But how should I know such a fine young lady as this was Betty Barker? It's a good thing you spoke, Miss Betty Barker."

Then he picked her up, pretending she was

a bag of meal, and tossed her up into the wagon.

Aunt Sue showed Betty where to find the cooky-jar, which was so full of dark and white cookies that the cover sat on it like a cocked hat, and told Betty to help herself whenever she was hungry.

Betty was very happy to be visiting and eating all the cookies she wanted. Aunt Martha never let her go near the cooky-jar at home. She always said, "If children are hungry they can eat plain bread and butter, and be glad enough for the butter!"

Betty was happy as she could be and danced all about the farm looking at the sleek cows chewing their cud, and the horses running about in the pasture. She petted a little lamb and fed the chickens. Then Mr. Sun went to bed. He peeped out at Betty for a moment before he hid his face under a big feather-bed

of clouds, and when he looked at her it made Betty think of how far away she was from Mother and Grandpa. Two giant tears came rolling down her cheeks, then two more came chasing after them. Then came another couple, racing faster than either of the others, and another and another and another, until there were so many not even a grown-up could have counted them.

Aunt Sue found her curled up in the window-seat where Mr. Sun had bade her good-night, sobbing, "I'll die or something if I don't see Mother or Grandpa quick! I'm going to die! I'm going to di—ie!"

"Dear me! I shouldn't have asked her to come by herself!" sighed Aunt Sue. "They warned me that she would be homesick. Betty, dear, if only you can stand it until to-morrow you'll be just as happy as you've been homesick to-day."

Homesick!

Betty caught her breath at that word and stopped crying.

That was exactly what she *wasn't* going to be!

"No, I'm not homesick, Aunt Sue!" she whispered. "I said I wouldn't be and I'm not!"

She sat up straight and squeezed her eyelids so tightly shut that not a tear could get past them.

"Then why are you crying?" asked Aunt Sue.

"I'm crying 'cause they don't write to me, Aunt Sue!"

She opened her eyes to peep at Aunt Sue, and the waiting tears popped out and began their race down her pale little cheeks.

"They haven't had time, dear child," said Aunt Sue, gathering Betty into her arms.

“But perhaps to-morrow there will be something in the mail-box for you.”

There was a footstep on the porch, the door opened and in walked GRANDPA!

“Oh-oh-ee!” cried Betty, bounding into his arms.

A smile turned up the corners of her lips, the last tear ran away in a hurry, and the big lump in her throat melted away.

“I’ve come to stay as long as you do, Betty girl. Can you guess why?” asked Grandpa, holding her close.

“You had such a lump in your throat you couldn’t swallow,” said Betty, snuggling up to him and pulling his white whiskers. “And you couldn’t keep the tears in your eyes ’cause you were so homesick for me! Poor Grandpa!”

## CHAPTER V

### THE PROUD CAKE

**O**NE warm September afternoon Betty wandered into the kitchen. It smelled so good in there that she wished Aunt Martha would let her help.

“What are you baking, Aunt Martha?” she asked.

“I’m baking a very rich cake and a plain loaf of bread,” replied Aunt Martha, wiping her face, which was red with warmth. “And it’s all because Mrs. Smith-Calvin is stopping off here for supper. The cake’s for dessert and the bread’s in case we’d run short. There always is a commotion when she comes around.”



There were bees buzzing in the pinks and zinnias outside the kitchen window. Betty liked to listen to them, so she sat down on a chair next to the window and put her head on the kitchen table. Soon she heard voices that sounded like the bees' buzzing. But it couldn't have been the bees, for she could understand words. After listening a minute she knew it was the rich cake and the plain loaf of bread talking.

“I suppose you wish you were rich and beautiful like me, don't you?” the Proud Cake said to the Plain Loaf of Bread. “Look at my lovely color! And these brown spots are all raisins!”

The Plain Loaf of Bread did not answer that a yellow complexion with big black blotches all over it was nothing to be proud of. It was a sweet and good loaf, so it said, “You are the color of sunshine and everybody loves

sunshine. I couldn't be your beautiful color, but I wish Aunt Martha had put some nice plump raisins in me, too!"

Betty wanted to say, "I'll ask Aunt Martha to stick some in you now," but she couldn't interrupt, for the Proud Cake was already speaking.

"Raisins belong to the cake family and not in common bread! What are you getting out of your pan for?"

"I'm just rising so that I can look at you to see how beautiful you are," replied the Plain Loaf of Bread. "I'd like so much to be beautiful, but since I can't I hope that, at any rate, I'll be good so that Aunt Martha won't be disappointed and so that Mrs. Smith-Calvin and all the rest will like me."

At this point Aunt Martha popped the talkers into the oven and Betty did not hear another word until they were taken out

again and sitting side by side on the kitchen table. Then the Plain Loaf of Bread cried to the Proud Cake, "Why, your beautiful sunshine color has changed to black and there's a hollow in your middle! What a shame!"

"That doesn't matter," replied the Proud Cake, "because Aunt Martha's going to put a beautiful white coat on me and then I'll be sweeter and lovelier than ever!"

"Will she put a white coat on me, too?" asked the Plain Loaf of Bread.

"Of course not! You're nothing but a Plain Loaf of Bread!"

"How I wish I could have one so that I could be beautiful and people would like me as they do you!"

"If only your mother'd heed my advice you'd be having your nap properly every after-

noon on the bed and not be dozing on my kitchen table!"

This was Aunt Martha and she was shaking Betty.

"Why, Aunt Martha, I'm not sleeping!" cried Betty.

"She's not sleeping!" said Aunt Martha, looking up at the ceiling.

"If I was sleeping how could I hear everything that the cake said to the bread?" asked Betty.

"She heard the cake and bread talking together and that shows she wasn't asleep!" remarked Aunt Martha, still talking to the ceiling.

It always made Betty feel naughty when Aunt Martha talked to the ceiling.

"And you'd better hurry, Betty Barker, and get that black face of yours washed. Can't tell where it stops and your hair begins. And



"WHY, AUNT MARTHA, I'M NOT SLEEPING."—Page 46.



get your hair combed and something clean on before the fine lady gets around. If you're looking like you do now when she comes you'll hear something from your mother."

This time Aunt Martha talked to Betty, so she ran off to get washed and combed and dressed.

The supper was delicious until it came to the cake. And Aunt Martha usually made such good cakes, too!

But to-night Mrs. Barker said, "Why, the cake fell!"

"My! Who let it fall?" asked Betty.

"Mother says it fell because of the hollow it has in the middle," explained Mrs. Barker. "I suspect that is why Aunt Martha gave it such an unusually thick coat of icing. Did you bake anything else to-day, Martha?"

"Nothing but a loaf of bread that I set in with the cake," replied Aunt Martha.

“Home-made bread fresh from the oven! But that *would* be a treat!” exclaimed Mrs. Smith-Calvin.

“I wish you’d bring it on, Martha,” said Mrs. Barker. “I think we’ll all enjoy it with these rich peach preserves.”

“That’s something like!” cried Mr. Barker when Aunt Martha brought in the Plain Loaf of Bread. “For my part, I’d never look at the best of cakes if I could always have such bread as this.”

“It is a beautiful loaf,” said Mrs. Barker.

“What a lovely golden brown it is!” cried Mrs. Smith-Calvin.

“And it wanted a white coat like the Proud Cake had so bad!” said Betty.

“She’s been going on like that ever since she went to sleep in the kitchen,” said Aunt Martha.

“Aunt Martha, I wasn’t ——”



“Eat your supper now, Betty,” said her mother. “And I think you might as well take the cake out and throw it into the garbage, Martha.”

## CHAPTER VI

### HORSES AND HORSES

**O**NE bright morning Grandfather put his head in the door to say:

“ Betty, I wish on the way to school you’d stop in at the Burkes’ and tell the boys when they come over to help me they’d better each bring a couple of horses along. Can you remember that? ”

“ I’ll ’member, ” replied Betty, nodding so hard that she pulled her straight black hair from out the ribbon her mother was trying to tie and it had to be done all over.

Grandpa smiled down on the little girl, wondering what made her eyes so bright and her lips so happy.

Betty did not knock at the door of the Burkes' house. She knew the way to their shop and ran around to it.

"Hello, boys!" she said to George and Ben Burke, just as Grandfather did, although they were both older than her own father.

"Hello, yourself," they said, laughing loudly.

"Grandpa said you'd better bring over a couple of horses. When you coming?"

"This afternoon, I presume," replied Ben.

"Do you presume you'll take the horses home to-night?" asked Betty.

"Oh, no, we'll likely leave them till we get through helping your grandpa," answered Ben, smiling down at her with his little watery blue eyes. "That'll likely be a week."

"O goody!" cried Betty, dancing about.

"Ain't she the queer one though, getting all excited about nothing at all!" remarked tall,

thin George, stopping his hammering to watch her.

The first moment of recess she told Ada that the Burke boys were going to bring a couple of horses over to Grandpa's and leave them there for "likely a week."

Although Ada could not see why anybody should be so very glad over anything like that, she wanted to please Betty, so she acted glad and rolled her blue eyes and said, "My, ain't that grand!"

"It's as grand as grand!" cried Betty.

At noon Betty said to her mother, "Can't I stop at Grandpa's shop this afternoon, Mother, 'stead of coming straight home from school?"

"Not to-day, dear," replied Mrs. Barker. "I intend to come to meet you and then we're going to walk out to see Aunt Hattie. She's been laid up with her knee again and has been

asking to see you. It's too far for you to go alone, so you and I'll go together to-night."

"Oh, Mother!" cried Betty, with tears of disappointment in her eyes.

The next morning Betty awoke with a dry cough and a sore throat. It hurt so that she could scarcely eat breakfast.

"Keep Betty home from school to-day," said her father as he was leaving the house in the morning.

"Don't I have to go to school?" Betty asked her mother.

"Not if Father says you should stay home. I wonder if you caught cold at Aunt Hattie's. Her house was so close!"

"But it won't hurt to go to Grandpa's shop, will it?" asked Betty.

"You can't go there either, dear. You'll have to stay in the house until we see what this develops into."

“But that’s such a tiny way! It wouldn’t hurt even a sorer froat than mine is,” said Betty.

“You cannot go anywhere to-day, Betty,” replied Mrs. Barker.

It was three days before Betty’s mother thought it wise for her to go outdoors.

“Can I go to Grandpa’s shop now?” asked Betty.

“He’d like to see you and I’m sure it won’t do you any harm,” answered her mother. “When you’re sick, I believe he suffers more than you do.”

When Betty danced into Grandpa’s shop she saw that he was working alone.

“Where are the Burke boys?” she asked.

“So you’re a well lady again, eh, midget?” cried Grandpa, catching her up and tossing her high up in the air.

“It didn’t develop,” said Betty. “Where are the Burke boys?”

“They finished up this morning.”

“Oh!” cried Betty.

Grandpa studied her face for a moment.

“What did you want of the Burke boys?” he asked.

“It wasn’t them,” said Betty.

“Who was it then?”

“It was their horses,” replied Betty. “I been counting on playing with them.”

“Well, you can play with them. They left them because they have to pass here to go to Wilson’s and they’ll take them along to-morrow.”

“Oh, where are their horses, Grandpa?” cried Betty, beginning to dance.

“Over there in the corner,” said Grandpa, going back to his work.

“Where?” asked Betty.

“Why, right in front of you! Did your illness make you blind, Betty Barker?” he teased.

“I said *horses*, Grandpa!”

“Well, there they are—bless me, Betty Barker, you didn’t think they were live horses, did you? I might have known that was why you were so crazy about them! Why, they’re nothing but wooden saw-horses, darling!”

Betty’s head was down on the near horse now and she was sobbing. Then Grandpa thought of something that drove the worried look from his kind eyes. He took Betty into his arms.

“Don’t you cry one more precious tear over those wooden animals, darling,” he whispered. “You listen to me. Know what we’re going to do to-morrow—just you and me? We’re going to take the train and go to Millers-town!”



Betty lifted her head and began to pat Grandpa's rough wrinkled cheek. The last time they had been to Millerstown they had had brown ice-cream in the morning and pink ice-cream in the afternoon.

“ And this time we're going to do something different in Millerstown. We're going to see something that'll make Betty Barker open her two brown eyes! What would she think of seeing a horse that can add up figures and spell its name and do a lot more things just as cute? That's what Betty Barker's going to see. What'd she care if these horses are wood when she can see such a sight as that!”

“ She wouldn't, Grandpa!” said Betty, snuggling close.

## CHAPTER VII

### BETTY MISSES HER LESSON

**B**ETTY squirmed about and looked at the clock again. She had been looking at it every few minutes since school had called at noon. Was there ever such a long afternoon?

Usually Betty liked school. But to-day was not a usual day. It was her father's birthday, and at five minutes past three she was to meet her mother so they might buy him a present together.

Spelling was the last lesson of the day. When Miss Blake told the children to get ready to write it, Betty took out her paper and pencil and wrote her name in neat round letters at the top of the paper. Very carefully

she wrote each word after the teacher had pronounced it. There was a particular reason why she wrote so carefully to-day. The pupil who missed a word had to stay after school for twenty minutes and write it over and over. That was bad enough any day—but to-day! Why, it would make her so late she couldn't help choose Father's birthday present!

“And I know 'xactly what he'd like,” thought Betty between words. “Mother might never even see it if I didn't show it to her.”

Her brown eyes brightened and she kicked her red-stockinged legs happily under the desk as she thought of the gay scarf-pin with the red and blue stones in it. Wouldn't Father be delighted with such a pin? If ever she had ten cents all her own again she'd surely buy one for herself!

All of the words were easy except the last

one. Betty wrote it as easily as she had the other nine but when she looked at it it did not seem right.

But it *must* be right to-day, for she couldn't stay after school!

Then Betty did something she had never done before.

She turned around and peeped at Ada Brunke's paper.

Ada was as good in spelling as she was poor in everything else. And Ada had written the last word "e-g-l-e."

"Course that's the way," said Betty, and quickly erased the letter "a" from her word, trying to make herself believe that she would have changed the word in that way even if she hadn't seen Ada's paper.

After they had taken a moment to look over their spelling the children exchanged papers across the aisle for correction. Miss Blake

spelled the words aloud. When she came to the last word she spelled it "e-a-g-l-e."

It was a quiet Betty who walked slowly home from school all alone. She stopped at the store where she was to have met her mother, but the clerk told her that she had gone long ago.

"Did she—did she buy one of those pins with the red and blue stones in it?" asked Betty.

"No, she didn't," answered the man with a smile.

"Oh!" sighed Betty. "They're so pretty they almost make you think of the 'Nited States flag, don't they?"

"You bet they do!" agreed the clerk with a laugh.

"Where were you, dear?" asked Mrs. Barker when Betty came into the sitting-room. "I waited a little while, then I was sure you'd forgotten, so I bought the present alone. I

didn't have any time to spare, on account of having company for Father for dinner to-night."

*Forgotten!*

Betty stared at her mother unbelievably. How could such a usually understanding person think she would forget anything so important as that!

One glance at her little daughter's face told Mrs. Barker how wrong she had been. She held out her arms and Betty flew into them. With her head on her mother's shoulder she told her what had happened.

"If only I hadn't copied from Ada's paper I'd been one hundred and I could have helped buy Father's present!" she sobbed.

"What *did* you get, Mother?"

"Some shirts. Father always likes shirts."

"Shirts!" sighed Betty.

And there were pins with red and blue stones to be had!

## CHAPTER VIII

### 'FRAIDY CAT!

**I**N October Aunt May and Cousin Bobby came to visit the Barkers. In many ways it was fun to have Bobby there, but he was such a tease!

One Saturday afternoon Grandpa left Betty and Bobby with Aunt Hattie who lived nearly a mile from town. He told them that he would stop for them in the evening and take them home. But Grandpa had not yet come at sundown. Then the telephone rang.

“Dear me!” said Aunt Hattie when she had finished talking. “Grandpa forgot to stop for you, Betty. And your mother says that you and Bobby should start for home at once so as to get there before it’s all dark.

She says it's perfectly safe. I'd take you part way myself if it wasn't for my lame knee. I don't dare go out at night with that. Shall you be afraid?"

Betty looked out of the window.

"I might be a little afraid, but not so very much, Aunt Hattie," she said.

"'Fraidy cat!" cried Bobby.

"Let's hurry, Bobby, before it gets any more dark," urged Betty.

"'Fraidy cat! Girls are always 'fraid! I aren't afraid, not if it was more darker—not even if it was *all* dark!" boasted Bobby.

"Please hurry, Bobby!" begged Betty.

"'Fraidy cat!" sang Bobby.

They kissed Aunt Hattie good-bye and scurried down the still road. It was around the supper hour so nobody was out. There was scarcely a sound except the hoot of an owl and the good-night twitter of the sleepy birds.



Owl-hoots and good-night twitters are lonely sounds.

“Isn't it still?” whispered Betty. “And aren't there many stars?”

“I seen lots manier stars than those!” bragged Bobby. “Bet you're scared they'll fall on you 'cause you're a 'fraidy cat!”

“You have not and I aren't!” cried Betty, stamping her foot. “You're always saying things, Bobby!”

“Anyhow I can run faster'n you! Girls can't never run and you're so fat ——”

“I am not fat, Bobby!” exclaimed Betty. “I'd just like to slap you!”

“You can't never slap me 'cause you can't run fast enough to catch me! You can't even keep up with me! I'm going to run away from you and leave you all alone in the d-a-rk, and then see how scared you'll be, Betty Barker!”

Bobby darted away down the road and in a

moment the fast-falling dusk hid him from Betty's sight. She stopped short and drew a long breath, then she looked up at the stars, twinkling at her just as they did when she was at home in bed.

"They're like angel eyes," she said to herself.

It made her feel less afraid to keep her eyes on them and she had hurried along for some distance when she heard the swift patter of the runaway's returning feet.

"Now he's sorry and he's coming back to make up," she thought.

But when he came close to her even in the dim dark she could see that it was a frightened instead of a sorry Bobby who had come back.

"Betty, there's something awful up ahead there!" he gasped, clinging to her with both hands. "It's right around the curve. We can't go that way!"

“That’s the only way we can go to get home,” said Betty. “And we got to get home fast ’s ever we can ’cause Mother’ll be ’specting us.”

“I won’t go that way! I won’t, Betty Barker!” cried Bobby.

“Come on!” said Betty, taking his hand.

“Let’s go back to Aunt Hattie’s!” he begged.

But Betty pulled him along.

“There it is! Look, Betty!” cried Bobby in a shrill whisper as they rounded the curve Bobby had spoken of.

For an instant Betty’s heart almost failed her and she, too, wanted to turn about and run back to Aunt Hattie’s as fast as her legs would carry her. But there was Mother waiting at home for her, and there were the bright, twinkling eyes above watching her. Then she remembered what she had heard the older girls

at school talking about, and she gave a little trembling laugh that was not far from tears.

“There’s nothing ’tall to be afraid of, Bobby,” she said. “That’s where Natalie Burke lives and she’s going to have a Halloween party to-night and that’s the decorations. George and Ben fixed it up for her. I heard her talking about it at school.”

But still Bobby held back.

“Just look close, Bobby, dear,” said Betty, tugging her cousin nearer step by step. “That can’t hurt us! It’s nothing but the Burkes’ hitching-post dressed up for Natalie’s party.”

The family were at the supper table still when the cousins reached home.

“Well, Bobby, did you take good care of your cousin coming home?” asked Aunt May.

“He didn’t need to take care of me,” said Betty.

Bobby looked at her out of the corner of his blue eyes.

Was she going to tell?

“There weren't any folks that were scared on the road between here and Aunt Hattie's, were there?” asked Mr. Barker.

Betty was so busy eating her supper that she only looked at her father and said nothing.

“Oh, ho!” laughed Mr. Barker. “So there were! Own up, Bettykins!”

Bobby laid down his fork and swallowed hard.

“There was a 'fraidy cat on the road, Uncle, but it wasn't Betty,” he said. “And anyhow she can't run faster'n me!”

“I know I can't, Bobby. Not nearly so fast,” said Betty.

## CHAPTER IX

### BETTY FINDS A PET

**B**ETTY went down the street on her way to school with a hop, skip, and jump.

The hop, skip, and jump were because she was so happy, and she was so happy because, clutched tightly in her hand, she had a shining new quarter of a dollar.

And this is how she came to have it.

Betty was always being late for school. There were so many interesting things to see on the way that she was very likely to forget and stop to look at something longer than she should have. That was why Grandpa said to her the first day of the month:

“If you’ll get to school on time every day this month, Betty Barker, I’ll give you a bright new quarter of a dollar. But if you’re late

even one second, and no matter what's the reason, you don't get it."

And she had been on time every day. Then this noon, on the last day of the month, he had come over to say:

"I'm going away for a couple of days, Betty. I know how hard you've tried to earn that bright new quarter of a dollar and I know you've been counting on getting it the minute the time's up. It doesn't seem hardly fair to make you wait two days for it. Since there's just this noon yet and you couldn't possibly be late if you start right now, here it is."

"Oh, thanks, Grandpa!" cried Betty, taking her prize and dancing up and down. "Of course I couldn't, and I'll start right this minute."

Betty had to go down one block that had not a single house in it. She generally ran here. To-day she was skipping along this block mer-

rily when a sound brought her to a sudden halt.

She looked around, but seeing nothing, she started on again—hippety-hop, hippety-hop!

She hadn't taken more than three skips when she heard the sound again, and again she stopped.

This time she was sure it came from a ditch that ran along the side of the road. It came again right in front of her as she reached the edge of the ditch and she saw, lying in it, a dirty, ragged little dog with blood matting the hair of his coat.

“Oh, dearie, what is the matter?” cried Betty.

The little dog looked up at her pleadingly. He could talk with those beautiful brown eyes even if he couldn't say anything in words. Now the eyes said, “Yes, I'm hurt, Betty. I'm in awful pain! Can you help me?”





"YOU CAN'T MOVE EVEN THE LITTLEST BIT, CAN YOU, DEARIE."—  
Page 73.



Betty, being an understanding little girl, knew very well what they were saying.

“You can’t move even the littlest bit, can you, dearie?” asked Betty, lying flat on the grass beside the ditch and kicking her red-stockinged legs in the air. “If you could move just a little speck at a time I could take you to a doctor and he’d make you well. But I ’spect you’re a terrible sick person and I’ll have to bring the doctor to you. You mustn’t mind ’cause I’m leaving you. I got to go for your sake!”

The dog moaned again, but Betty did not let it stop her. Her red legs twinkled down the street and she burst into Dr. Henderson’s office so unexpectedly that she nearly upset the short, round little doctor who was hanging up his coat on the back of the door through which she came.

“Hello!” cried the doctor, rubbing his el-

bow. "What's the row that you nearly kill me? Mother sick again?"

"No, it's somebody else now," said Betty. "Do you charge as much to doctor a dog as a lady?"

"Well ——" began the doctor.

"It's a dog 'thout folks," went on Betty. "I thought maybe you'd do it some cheaper for him. But you'll have to hurry. He's sufferin' terrible."

The doctor took out his big watch and looked at it. But aren't grown folks slow!

"Ten minutes past one," he said, tucking the big silver watch into a bulging pocket. "Yes, I guess I can go now. Where is he?"

Betty stopped short. Ten minutes past one! That reminded her that in five minutes school would call. If she started at once she'd get there in time, for the school building was just around the corner from the doctor's office.

But there was the dog.

“ I’ll take you to him,” said Betty, placing her small brown hand in the doctor’s plump pink one. The doctor took his black leather case in the other hand and they started for the dog in the ditch.

“ Poor little chap!” said the doctor when he saw the patient. “ Been hit by a machine! But you must be a pretty slow dog to let a car hit you!”

“ You oughtn’t not talk like that to him when he’s sick,” reproved Betty. “ Maybe he was saving somebody’s life or something.”

“ Most likely something!” said Dr. Henderson with a laugh.

“ Now, Miss Barker, I think you’d better look the other way or you may give a squeal or two as well as the cur,” he said after he had examined the dog. “ I’m going to hurt him pretty bad for a couple of minutes but I’ll have

to to make him well in the end. Understand?"

Betty nodded.

"I guess I won't neither turn the other way though," she said. "I'll hold his head and talk to him. It'll seem more like he has folks if somebody does that."

When it was all over a white little Betty followed the plump doctor to his office. He carried the dog carefully in his free arm. When he reached the office he placed him gently in his favorite cushioned chair.

"Don't you just love him?" asked Betty, hanging over the chair and stroking the dirty, matted hair of the dog.

"Well ——" said the doctor, eyeing the ugly little stranger with twinkling eyes. "How many dogs of your own have you?"

"I haven't one! Nor no cats, neither! Nor nothing else 'count of Aunt Martha. She says

they all the time get under foot and it makes her nervous."

"Is to-day Saturday?" asked the doctor suddenly.

"Friday," answered Betty.

"Then why are you playing hookey? Why aren't you in school?"

Dr. Henderson sounded very cross, but Betty was not afraid of him. She would never be afraid of him now because he had been so kind to the hurt dog.

"I'm going now," she said. "I had to get you for the dog."

She opened her warm little hand and placed the shining new quarter on the doctor's dark wooden desk, then turned away quickly so that she would not see its beautiful shine.

"That's to pay for him. It's all I got," she said.

As she spoke she remembered that, after

all, the money was not hers now. She had not been to school on time every day this month.

“And I haven’t got that!” she cried, picking it up again. “I’ve got to give it back to Grandpa. He said he’d give it to me if I wasn’t late even a second all month but if I was late, no matter why, I couldn’t have it. But I’ll pay for him with my pennies. I get lots of them. Sometimes you have to wait for other folks, too, don’t you?”

“You bet I do!” replied the doctor. “But I’ve been thinking that since he hasn’t any folks I’d just like to do it for nothing.”

Betty was beaming as she skipped out of the office. Even Miss Blake’s scolding because she was so very late did not take the happiness out of Betty’s heart. Nor even losing the new quarter could take it all away.

When Grandfather came back, Betty gave it to him.



It hurt him more to take it than it did for Betty to part with it, but his word was his word and Grandpa never went back on that.

One evening not long after this Dr. Henderson dropped in. Betty was already in bed, so she did not see her friend. He had a market-basket with him which he carried very carefully and set down on the floor beside him. For an hour he talked with Mr. and Mrs. Barker and Aunt Martha and Grandpa. Aunt Martha sniffed every now and then. Once she reached over and very gingerly patted the ragged head with the brown eyes that peeped over the edge of the basket.

“So you see I think it’s a shame for a child that’s as crazy over animals as Betty is not to have a single live pet,” said the doctor at last. “And she’s earned the right to keep this yellow cur.”

“Seeing how it is, I guess I could stand it

if he did get under foot, and I'll try not to notice my nerves," said Aunt Martha.

"And what's a quarter to Betty compared with him!" chuckled Grandpa.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PINK-EYED COOKY BOY

“**M**Y, it’s the loveliest present I ever did see!” cried Betty when she opened the newspaper package which Ada gave her the last day of school before the Christmas holidays.

“Ain’t it just grand?” agreed Ada. “An’ I made it every speck myself an’ I put pink pep’mint eyes in ’count of you like pink pep’-mints so much, Betty.”

“And just think that you could make him all your own self with pink eyes ’n’ everything! You’re a nawful smart girl, Ada—’bout some things.”

Betty had to add that last, for she very well

knew that Ada was anything but "smart" at school, except in spelling.

"I am," replied Ada.

"I can't hardly wait 'til I get home to show him to Grandpa," said Betty. "I'm going to hurry fast 's ever I can."

Betty started for home, hippety-hop, holding the gingerbread boy carefully in front of her so that she could smell his sweetness and spiciness the better.

"My, how lovely you do smell!" she said to him.

As she hippety-hopped past the blacksmithshop, Billy limped out of the door. He was the blacksmith's little boy. He was always ragged and dirty, and crippled so that he could not run about as other children did. This made Betty feel so sorry for him that she never passed him without stopping for a friendly word.

Now she paused in the middle of a hop and said, "Hello, Billy! Look what I got! It's a Christmas present that Ada made for me all her very own self!"

"M-m-mm!" sighed Billy, sniffing hungrily even before Betty had taken the wrappings from the pink-eyed cooky boy. "We never have nothin' 'at smells good like 'at to our house!"

Betty knew that Billy's mother was dead and that an old aunt tried to keep house for them. She had heard the grown-ups say that his father did not amount to much and she knew they were very poor.

She looked long at the cooky boy.

He was such a big, fat one that surely she could give lame Billy a taste and still there'd be lots of him left. The pink-eyed boy would be a little crippled himself if she did it, but Billy would be happy.

“There’s a lot on one of his legs, Billy,” she said. “They’re awful thick ones. You can have a leg.”

Billy grabbed a leg with never a thought about spoiling the pink-eyed boy’s beauty. He put the leg between his two rows of small white teeth and said, “M-m-mm!” again.

Betty hopped happily on her way until she turned the corner and ran plump into the big thin dog that was always nosing around garbage cans.

“I s’pose you’re hungry ’susual,” she said reproachfully as he sniffed at the package. “I ’spect you smelled my pink-eyed cooky boy and you’d really ought to have a Christmas present. I don’t believe you ever did have one in all your life. Well, you can have the other leg. There’s a lot to it.”

Betty had to close her eyes while she broke off the other leg and held it out to the thin dog.

He gave a sharp bark of thanks and gobbled up the leg with a gulp.

“I hope I won’t meet anybody else that needs a present,” said Betty as she wrapped up the legless gingerbread boy and went on her way.

But even as she said it she saw across the street the ragged ragman’s bony horse. Only yesterday she had cried herself almost sick because the ragged ragman himself was giving the bony horse a beating because he found it hard to pull a heavy load.

“I guess I’ll pretend I don’t see him,” thought Betty.

But she had taken only a few steps when she stopped and looked across at the horse.

“Poor thing, you’ve got to have a present—getting whipped ’n’ everything!” she cried.

Running across the road, she unwrapped the legless, pink-eyed cooky boy and examined him.

“The arms are lots littler than the legs,” she said. “There wouldn’t be much on one for such a big mouth as you’ve got. I s’pose you’ll just have to have his two arms!”

She broke them off and held them up to the bony horse. He snapped them both up at one mouthful.

“And I’d like to give you a lovely pink eye extra ’cause you love candy and you have such a nawful hard time of it with whippings ’n’ everything. Here ’tis!”

Betty pulled out one of the pink peppermint eyes and held it up to the bony brown horse. He picked it up on his red tongue and Betty was sure he looked much happier even though he did gobble so fast she wondered how he could taste it at all.



“That’s all, and ‘Merry Christmas’!” she said as she hopped away.

She stopped her hopping when she met little yellow-headed Teddy Smith.

“What you crying for?” she asked as she saw that both his dirty fists were rubbing his blue eyes.

“I losted my canny penny!” whimpered Teddy.

“Don’t cry, little boy,” said Betty, putting her arm around him and kissing him. “I got something nicer ’n the candy-store, Teddy. Look!”

Scarcely daring herself to look at the legless, armless, one-eyed cooky boy, Betty broke off the head with its lonely pink eye staring out in surprise at such doings, and gave it to little Teddy Smith.

Teddy’s tears turned to smiles, but his mouth was too full of the cooky boy’s head to talk.

Betty hopped on home.

Grandpa was there and she ran to him for a hug and a kiss.

“Ada gave me the loveliest gingerbread cooky boy that she baked all by her own self with pink pep’mints for eyes!” cried Betty, unwrapping what was left of the cooky boy.

“If you call that the loveliest gingerbread boy, then they’ve changed some since my young days,” said Grandpa. “Ours had arms and legs, and sometimes raisins for eyes and nose and buttons. That looks to me more like a thick ginger cooky.”

“But that isn’t all of him!” cried Betty. “It’s only what’s left. He had two fat legs and two arms and pink pep’mint eyes, Grandpa! I gave Billy Blacksmith a leg ’cause he’s so mis’bul and the garbage dog a leg ’cause he’s so hungry, and the ragged ragman’s bony brown horse I had to give two arms ’cause

his mouth's so big, and I gave him a pink pep'-mint eye 'cause he got a whipping, and Teddy Smith lost his penny so I gave him the other eye and the head!"

"Well, now that I know the life history of the boy it seems to me he is just about the finest cooky boy I ever did see!" said Grandpa. "I know it's the best-looking cooky I ever saw. I don't know but that it looks better to me than even the whole cooky boy would have—pink eyes and all."

"If you like it so, you take it and eat it, Grandpa!" cried Betty, thrusting the round, puffed body of the pink-eyed cooky boy into her grandfather's hand.

"Bless your dear generous heart, Betty Barker!" said Grandpa, stooping to kiss her. "I couldn't eat a bite of that cooky boy even if it is the best-looking one ever was."

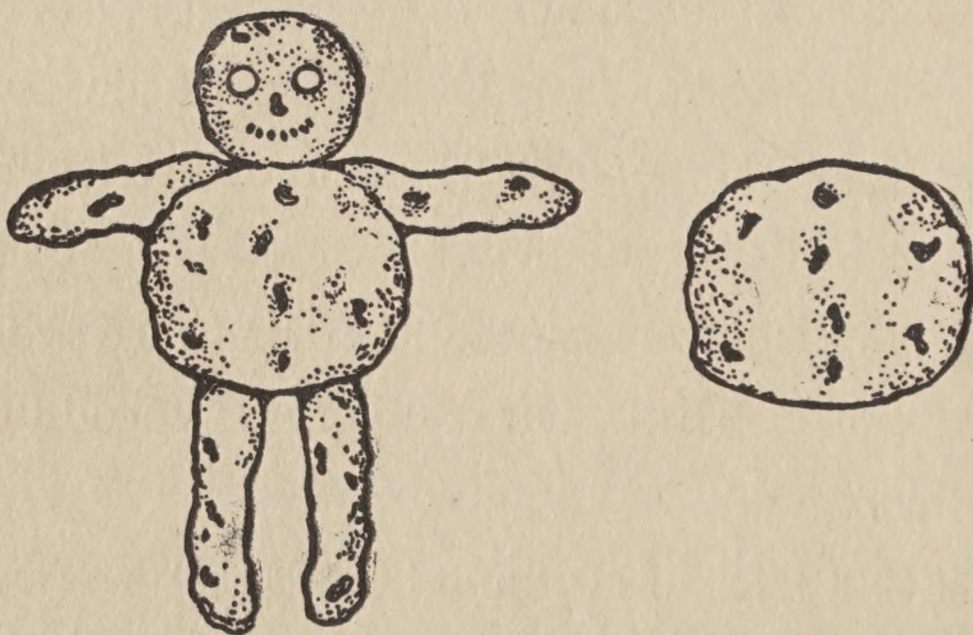
"If you think he's lovely now, Grandpa, I

wish you could 'a' seen him with his arms and legs and eyes on!" sighed Betty.

Grandpa shook his head.

"He couldn't have looked so pretty to me then as he does now, Betty, darling!" said Grandpa.

### THE PINK-EYED COOKY BOY



BEFORE

and

AFTER

## CHAPTER XI

### ADA'S TURN

**S**ANTA CLAUS does not always come down the chimney!

Ada will tell you that, and she knows! The first time he actually came to her he did not go near the chimney. In fact, he stopped a good distance from it, as though he were afraid of it. But then it wasn't an encouraging chimney.

If Santa looks anything like his picture (and all the boys and girls who have seen him say he does) he could never have gone down Ada's chimney. He would not have been the smart old fellow that he is if he had even tried to do so, for there's not a doubt but that he would

have stuck in it. Then half the world of children would have had to go without Christmas presents because Santa Claus was held in Ada Brunke's old chimney, tight by his very fat middle. The chimney was a little, tumbling-down affair on the top of a small, tired house that had settled down on its side next to the railroad track.

But on this particular Christmas Ada wanted Santa to come as she had never wanted him before. Perhaps making the pink-eyed cooky boy for Betty had made her think more about Christmas. Betty had told her that she expected lots of presents, for Santa Claus always stopped at her house. She even promised that if she could keep awake and could see Santa Claus herself, she would ask him especially to stop at the broken-down house next to the railroad track. And if he hadn't put any presents in especially for Ada she would

tell him to divide up her own presents with her, and maybe he might take one or two presents from some rich little girl.

“Don't you guess he'll come to-night, Ma?” Ada asked anxiously as evening drew near.

“He don't come no place where folks ain't got no money,” replied Mrs. Brunke, pressing a knotted hand against her side.

“I guess he ain't going to pass me by every single time all my life,” said Ada. “And if Betty Barker kin keep awake she's goin' to tell him to come here and leave me some of her presents. Maybe it'll be my turn to-night and he'll stop off here like he does to other children's houses.”

“Other folks 's got money,” answered Mrs. Brunke drearily.

Ada was used to her mother's discouraged way of talking and paid not so much attention

to it as she did to Betty's promise that she would speak a good word for her to Santa Claus.

So she hung up her stocking. Even that was different from other folks'. It did not look at all like a stocking when she left it dangling from a rusty nail in the door-frame, for she had to tie a knot in it just above the heel because the foot had so many holes in it and such big holes that even an orange would not have stopped them up. But it was all Ada had, and if Santa Claus filled even that skinny leg of a stocking it would be a merry, merry Christmas for Ada Brunke!

Christmas morning came with a bright blue sky and bitter cold. No fire was kept overnight in the shanty next to the railroad track, but Ada did not mind the cold. She did not have to dress on cold mornings because she did



not take off her clothes on cold nights. They were needed to keep her warm beneath the thin bed-covers.

The minute she awoke she hopped out of bed and ran, barefoot, to the door of the next room, for it was Christmas morning and there might be ——!

But there wasn't!

Not a sign was there that Santa Claus had been there the night before!

The skinny stocking, with the big knot just below its middle, dangled as empty as a last-year's bird's-nest.

Ada did not cry. She bit her lip hard and tiptoed to the window in her bare feet to have a look at the Christmas weather. But she did not see the blue sky, with the pink of the sunrise touching little white clouds, nor did she notice the weather at all. For there at the gate lay a Christmas tree—not an ordinary, every-

day Christmas tree, either, but one of the big kind that they have at Sunday School entertainments. A short distance from the big green tree was a box wrapped in red and green paper and another wrapped in gold paper and ever so many knobby packages wrapped in any kind of paper at all.

“ I knew Santy would have to remember me!” cried Ada. “ I just guess he did! He’s too smart to try to get down that chimbley of our’n but he give me a turn!”

Ada’s mother shook her head when she saw the Christmas tree and the packages and boxes scattered near the gate.

“ I dunno about it, Ada!” she said.

Then a new spirit seemed to take hold of her. Her little girl had never had anything, why shouldn’t these gifts be hers? Suppose she weren’t with her child another Christmas? Why not give her something to remember?

So she tied an old red shawl over her head and around her thin shoulders, and together she and Ada dragged in the tree and carried in the boxes and packages.

There were candies and candles, nuts and pop-corn, apples and oranges, and everything else that was ever put on a Christmas tree.

And such presents! A fur-trimmed coat and a bonnet, a muff, picture-books, skates, games, a ball, an umbrella, a big doll that could talk and go to sleep, and a bed and perambulator just the right size for the big, golden-curved doll.

Away over in another part of the town, in her big, rich house was a more surprised little girl that Christmas morning than even Ada Brunke. For Ada had more than half expected all the time that Santa Claus would remember her this year, while not even in her

wildest dreams could Vivian Prendergast have imagined that he would forget all about her.

The fattest Santa Claus ever pictured could have gone down the big chimney of her father's house without so much as taking in a breath to make himself smaller. He had never yet failed to bring Vivian everything a little girl could think of and a number of things she never could have thought of by herself.

And this time he didn't come!

"What's the matter with Santa Claus?" sobbed Vivian in her nurse's arms.

"I 'spect it's count of your ma being away and everything was left till the last minute!" comforted black Lucile. "Just you wait till to-morrow come, honey, and they'll buy out all the stores for you."

And while Vivian was questioning her nurse the colored coachman was saying to Mr. Prendergast:



TOGETHER SHE AND ADA DRAGGED IN THE TREE.—Page 97.



“ I honest to goodness don't know where them things took themselves to, suh! What with everything being left till the last minute and all them things to get at the store and the post-office I told you I was a-skeerd they'd tip before I left town, don't you dismember, suh? And them hosses was skeered-like all the way home, so's I couldn't hardly hold them and I couldn't watch them presents nohow, else they'd run away. I been all along back the way I came and them presents they ain't nowhere, suh!”

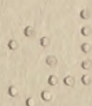
## CHAPTER XII

### A "NIMPOSSIBLE" CHILD

"SINCE her mother is sick you might bring Ada home with you this noon and she can have her lunch here," said Mrs. Barker to Betty one morning as she was starting for school.

"Ada couldn't come to-day 'cause her apron'd be dirtier than usual 'count of her mother being sick. She's got to know ahead when she's going any place so's she can wear her dirty apron longer and save the clean one for going away. Ada's only got two aprons and she can't go any place 'less she wears one."

"Then suppose you invite her for Wednes-





day," said Mrs. Barker. "She'll probably enjoy it all the more for having a few days to look forward to it."

"Ada's coming for lunch to-day!" cried Betty at the breakfast table on Wednesday morning.

"Surely not *to-day*, Betty!" exclaimed Mrs. Barker.

"Why, it *is* to-day, Mother!" persisted Betty. "Don't you remember how you said divide her for Wednesday 'count of a clean apron?"

"Yes, I did say '*invite* her for Wednesday,' and then forgot all about it," admitted Mrs. Barker. "If it were only any other day or any one else but Ada! Mrs. Smith-Calvin is going to lunch with us to-day, Betty, and I can't help but think Ada would have a better time if we were alone."

"But Ada'll like lots better to have some-

body else 'cause that makes it like a party," said Betty. "Ada'll be glad as glad!"

Ada, in a stiffly starched blue-and-white checked gingham apron with a row of china buttons down the back, with her pale red hair braided in two tight little braids and fastened with pieces of string, gazed adoringly at the dazzling Mrs. Smith-Calvin and was "glad as glad!"

"Ain't it grand to have such a swell to eat with—silks 'n' di'mon's 'neverything! Don't she shine, though?" she whispered to Betty. But the whisper was loud enough to be heard in the other room.

Betty looked across the table at the magnificent guest and then at the small gingham-clad figure beside her.

"She does shine! Let's call her the Spark-

ling Lady like a fairy story. It's nice to have her here, but not any nicer 'n 'tis to have you, Ada," said Betty.

Ada's thin little face flushed with happiness. Betty had said *that!* It made her almost too happy to eat.

"Don't you like baked potatoes, Ada?" asked Mrs. Barker, not understanding the reason for the untouched food on the little guest's plate.

"Yes'm. I do when they're clean," replied Ada.

Mrs. Smith-Calvin laughed and her laugh had music in it like a bird's song.

"These are," said Betty. "Aunt Martha did 'em and she cleans dreadful clean. When Mother was sick she got me ready for school, 'n' I know."

"And it's high time for you to be going there now," said Aunt Martha, pausing on her

way to the kitchen. "I was behind with the lunch and there's no time to spare."

"But we didn't have dessert yet, and Ada's company!" cried Betty.

"Aunt Martha will cut you each a piece of sponge cake and you can eat that on the way to school," said Mrs. Barker.

"And finger-bowls! Oh, Mother, you always do have finger-bowls when Mrs. Smith-Calvin is here to meals! Can't Ada and me have 'em, too, 'cause Ada's company?"

"Yes, yes, Betty," consented her mother.

Aunt Martha brought the finger-bowls, and Betty dipped her pink finger tips in the little glass dish and then dried them carefully on her napkin.

Ada watched her curiously but left her bowl untouched.

"Why don't you do it, Ada?" asked Betty.

"I don't like to wash my hands when they

ain't dirty," returned Ada. "And mine ain't now 'cause I scrubbed 'em extra this morning 'count of coming here to eat."

"But that's dif'rent as dif'rent from putting your fingers in a finger-bowl. Finger-bowls are to be stylish and not to be clean and you don't have 'em at the table 'less there's company, so when your company you should dip in one. C'mon, Ada, or we'll be late!"

The two little girls hurried out, but not quite quickly enough for Betty to escape hearing Mrs. Smith-Calvin say, "What an impossible child! How can you allow Betty to play with her?"

On her way home from school Betty stopped at her grandfather's carpenter shop.

"What's a nimpossible child, Grandpa?" she asked.

"There isn't such a thing, blessedness," replied Grandpa, picking her up and kissing her,

“There just isn’t such a thing and whoever says it doesn’t know the heart of a little child.”

Betty hopped on home. Mrs. Smith-Calvin was still there. Betty could hear her laugh trilling even before she saw her. She danced up to her and said, “Ada and me are going to call you the Sparkling Lady like a fairy story ’cause you shine so, and there isn’t any such a thing as a nimpossible child, and when anybody says it they don’t know the heart of a little child.”

The Sparkling Lady drew Betty to her and gazed long into Betty’s earnest face. Then a mist came over her violet eyes and she whispered, “You are right, dear. And I must learn to know the hearts of little children. I want to begin right away. So I’m going to have you and Ada take lunch with me at the hotel to-morrow. It will be ready when you come in and you won’t have to leave before the



THE SPARKLING LADY DREW BETTY TO HER.—Page 106.





dessert. And there'll be finger-bowls with little candies on the plate beside them."

"And Ada can go to-morrow 'cause her apron'll be clean enough from to-day," said Betty happily.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BETTY AND ADA GO OUT TO LUNCH

**I**T seemed to the two little girls the next day that the noon hour would never come, for their thoughts were not on their lessons but on the luncheon they were to have with the Sparkling Lady at a real hotel.

Ada looked at the clock so often that she did not have time to finish her numbers, which meant that she must stay after school. But that would be in the afternoon and Ada cared not a whit so long as she did not have to stay in at noon and so miss the luncheon. She would almost rather be in the cool schoolroom with its pretty pictures and bright flowers anyway than to be at home where conditions were

never very pleasant, and now that her mother was sick they were worse than ever.

But twelve o'clock did come at last, as everything does come if only we wait long enough. The children lost not a second in scurrying down the street and around the corner to the big white building with green blinds, which was the hotel. Betty wore her red-and-blue plaid silk dress, her new red ribbons, and red silk stockings. Ada had on the same stiff blue-and-white gingham apron she had worn to Betty's house, and she had kept it surprisingly clean for the Sparkling Lady's party. Her hair was combed back as smoothly and tightly as she could comb it, and braided in the same two pigtails tied with string.

Betty had asked her mother if she ought not to tie her black mop of hair back with string instead of the new ribbons so as to be polite to Ada, but Mrs. Barker told her she should be

polite to Mrs. Smith-Calvin by looking her prettiest. Betty thought this an easy way to be polite.

Mrs. Smith-Calvin in her bright blue silk dress, with her shining golden hair and starry violet eyes, looked quite as sparkling to the little girls as she had the day before when they had given her her new name. She met them on the hotel verandah and kissed them both. She did not seem to notice a bit of difference between Ada's gingham apron and string-tied pigtails, and Betty's plaid silk dress and glossy black hair topped off with the new red ribbons.

Betty was glad of this. She had not been quite sure of the Sparkling Lady because she had called Ada "a nimpossible child." But that was before she had looked so sweetly into Betty's eyes and said she wanted to know the hearts of little children. Probably knowing

hearts made you act different about lots of things.

“ I’ve spoken for the round table over there in the corner where the people are just getting up,” said the Sparkling Lady, taking the girls by the hand and leading them to the table as she spoke.

“ O my!” cried Ada a moment after she had slipped into her chair at the table.

“ What is it, dear?” asked the Sparkling Lady.

“ Nothin’,” replied Ada, but her red, freckled little hand was busy with the pocket of her apron.

“ Now we must not have any delay, please,” said the Sparkling Lady to the white-aproned, white-capped maid who cleared off the table. “ These little girls are my guests and I want them to have the nicest lunch we can give them with plenty of time to eat it, for they must

be through so as to get back to school on time.”

The girl answered not a word, but clattered the dishes together and jerked off the service cloth angrily.

“My, but she’s awful cross!” said Betty. “That’s the way Aunt Martha acts when she’s mad. Maybe this lady doesn’t like to have children come to her house to eat.”

“Her crossness can have nothing to do with us I am sure,” replied the Sparkling Lady. “Shall I tell you what we’re going to have? Chicken soup, fried chicken, creamed potatoes, fruit salad, and little brown rolls. Then for dessert we’ll have pink ice-cream and white frosted cakes.”

“That’s a reg’lar party!” cried Betty with dancing brown eyes as she clapped her hands.

“M-m-mm! Ain’t that grand!” said Ada.

“With pink ice-cream 'n' frosted cake 'nevery-thing!”

“And finger-bowls,” added Betty.

“I don't care so much for them things like wash-basins,” replied Ada.

They enjoyed the luncheon even to the finger-bowls with pink and green candies on the plate beside them. Ada was persuaded to dip her dark-rimmed little fingers into the water when she was told she must do so if she wished to eat the candies. But at last the luncheon was over and it was time to go back to school.

“I can't say that our maid deserves this, and yet ——” said the Sparkling Lady as though speaking to herself. She finished her sentence by slipping something bright under her napkin.

For just a second Ada loitered behind the Sparkling Lady and Betty. She whispered “O my!” to herself again and once more her

red freckled hand was busy with the pocket of her apron. The maid came along, flipped up the napkins and gave a rude laugh. The Sparkling Lady's pretty pink color turned a deep red for a moment and her eyes sparkled in a different way from what Betty had seen them before.

“ I had a very nice time and thank you very much,” said Betty properly as they bade the Sparkling Lady good-bye. “ Now you say it, Ada!”

“ Me, too!” agreed Ada heartily.

On the way back to school Ada said, “ If you wait till I get my numbers done to-night, me 'n' you kin go and get stacks of ice-cream and choclut candy.”

“ What you pertending, Ada Brunke?”

“ I ain't pertending nothin',” replied Ada. “ Look! Can't we?”

Ada opened her warm little palm and there



against its pinkness there rested two silver pieces of money, just the kind Grandpa had given Betty for not being late for school, and which she had had to return to him.

Betty had never seen Ada have even a penny before.

“Wherever did you get such a ter’ble lot of money, Ada?” she asked.

“I found ’m!” answered Ada.

“Where did you find two?” asked Betty.

“I found ’em on the table where we et,” said Ada.

“I don’t think you ought to tooken them, Ada. Maybe somebody put them there instead of just losing them. You can’t spend them ’cause it wouldn’t be polite to the Sparkling Lady when we were her company. We got to go and tell her we found such a lot of money on the table and if she says it’s all right, ’tis.”

The children ran back to the hotel and while

Ada held out the two quarters on her pink little palm, Betty explained how she came to have them.

“No wonder the maid was rude and we had such poor service!” exclaimed the Sparkling Lady. “She knew that first quarter had been left for her by the people she served before us and then she thought we left without giving her anything after making a good many extra demands upon her. We’ll go and find the maid and Ada may give the money to her. They’re called tips, dear, and we leave them on the table to show that her services are appreciated.”

“They were ’preciated,” said Betty.

They found the girl and Mrs. Smith-Calvin explained.

“I shouldn’t ’a’ acted that way, ma’am,” said the girl half sobbing. “And I won’t ever again, no matter what. But I been wanting

extra money so bad on account of my ma. She's sick and needs things ——”

“That's all, dears. Run along to school now,” said the Sparkling Lady to the children.

Then she turned to the maid and said, “Now tell me all about your mother. I'm so happy studying the hearts of people and if I can help your mother ——”

“Now we know a new name for quarters, don't we, Ada?” said Betty as they skipped back to school, hand in hand. “They're tips, Ada, and I like to say tips better than to say quarters, don't you? If I hadn't been late that day I helped my dog Custard, I could have kept the tip Grandpa gave me. But then I'd rather have Custard than a tip and if I hadn't helped him get a doctor I wouldn't ever have got him.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### ADA FINDS A NEW HOME

“**A**DA’S ma’s dead!” exclaimed Betty one noon as she came in from school.

“What?” asked Mrs. Barker, dropping a blue-and-white dish she was carrying out to the kitchen. It fell to the floor and shivered into little pieces.

“Ada’s ma’s dead!” repeated Betty, her eyes on the broken blue-and-white dish.

“Say ‘mother,’ dear,” corrected Mrs. Barker. “But, Betty, I didn’t have the least idea that Mrs. Brunke was so sick. I thought she just wasn’t feeling well as she’s complained a good deal the last year according to what Ada has told you. If I’d known she was so sick I’d have gone to see her and taken her currant jelly and fruit and such things.”

“ Oh, you didn’t have to,” answered Betty.  
“ The Sparkling Lady did that.”

“ Who? ” asked Mrs. Barker.

“ The Sparkling Lady—that’s what me an’ Ada call Mrs. Smith-Calvin now ’count of she shines so with silk and di’mon’s and everything. She took oranges and chicken and jelly and grapes and flowers and pillows and sheets and everything to Ada’s ma—mother, so you didn’t need to.”

“ Sibyl Smith-Calvin doing that for such a person as Ada’s mother!” exclaimed Mrs. Barker. “ But how could Sibyl Smith-Calvin do all this? She’s not staying here. She always lets me know when she is.”

“ She comes in a great big automobile away from where she lives almost every day,” explained Betty. “ Why is Ada’s mother *such a person?* ”

“ Well, she must have had a change of

heart," went on Mrs. Barker, not heeding Betty's question. "She used never to think of a soul besides herself and here she's doing work that I've neglected to do and which rightfully belonged to me since I'm right here in the same town with Mrs. Brunke."

"It's 'count of she's understanding hearts now, Mother," said Betty. "She used to look at clothes and manners and now 'stead she looks underneath your plaid silk or your gingham apron to your heart. And you needn't mind 'bout Ada's ma—mother,—'cause the Sparkling Lady took her nicer things than you would have."

"It's not that Mrs. Brunke has not been cared for that hurts me, Betty, but the fact that I was so thoughtless as not to go to see a sick woman—one of my own townswomen," replied Mrs. Barker. "And now poor little Ada is left motherless."

“She’s ’thout folks like Custard used to be. But she don’t act poor, Mother. She acts awful proud ’cause her mother’s dead.”

“Proud! What a word to use, darling! Ada’s probably stunned a little by her grief and hasn’t much to say, but that isn’t being proud.”

“But she has got a nawful lot to say!” cried Betty. “She says ‘My, ain’t it grand to have the Sparkling Lady by our house all the time!’ and she says they’re going to have a grand fun’ral with lots and lots of flowers and a minister and carriages, and Ada says her ma’s got a black silk dress and it’s the first black silk dress she ever did have ——”

“That’s enough, dear,” said Mrs. Barker. “Ada simply doesn’t realize that her mother is dead. She hasn’t had time to miss her yet. Just now she is all taken up with the excite-

ment. When Ada really comprehends that she will never have her mother with her again, she will certainly feel sad, for I'm sure Ada is a loving little girl. There has been very little change in her life and now to have the one whom you two call the Sparkling Lady in her home most of the time and arranging things as only Sibyl Smith-Calvin with all her money could arrange them, keeps her from realizing what it means."

Betty's mother spoke with understanding.

Ada's pride in the black silk-robed figure, lying so grandly and so quietly in the strangely clean front room with red and white roses in a great bank behind her, soon turned to a grief that would not be comforted when she began to realize that never again would her mother in the old gray calico dress be pottering about the house doing the homely tasks which must



be done for herself and little daughter. Then Ada did break down and cry as though she would never stop crying.

“I think Ada had better come home with Betty,” suggested Mrs. Barker the day of the funeral when she and Mrs. Smith-Calvin and Ada and Betty were returning together in a carriage from the cemetery. “It will take her mind off this until arrangements can be made. There isn’t a relative on either side that I have ever heard of.”

“None that anybody knows about,” answered Mrs. Smith-Calvin. “I inquired at the last and Mrs. Brunke said she had no kith or kin. She settled down in that old house when Ada was a baby and that’s about all that is known of her.”

“I suppose there’s nothing but an orphanage for her,” whispered Mrs. Barker.

“No, Mary, it’s not going to be an orphan-

age," replied the Sparkling Lady. "It's going to be my home."

She sparkled very little that day, Betty noticed. There were delicate shadows outlined beneath her beautiful violet eyes and there was a softened sweetness about her that made Betty love her more than ever.

"It won't be necessary to take Ada home with you unless you are very anxious to," she went on. "I've talked it all over with Robert. He is willing, although of course he smiles at me for it. But I've been planning to take Ada right on home with me to-day. From now on she's our little girl ——"

"But, Sibyl Smith-Calvin!" cried Mrs. Barker. "Ada ——"

"I know all that you could tell me and perhaps a little more since I've spent most of my time in the little shanty for the last few days," interrupted the Sparkling Lady. "But Rob-

ert and I have a beautiful home without children. Then here is a child left all alone in the world and thrown right under my protection. Is there anything else to do?"

"Will Ada be your very own child and will you be her ma?" asked Betty with wide brown eyes fixed upon the Sparkling Lady's pretty face.

"Yes, dear—her mother," replied Mrs. Smith-Calvin.

"Then Ada'll be richer than I am, won't she, Mother?" asked Betty.

"We're not rich, Betty," replied her mother. "We're merely comfortable."

"Then she'll be more merely comfortable, won't she?" asked Betty.

"She'll have all that we can give her to make her happy and to help her to grow into the girl we want her to be," replied Mrs. Smith-Calvin. "But she could not have a

home with more love in it than you have, Betty, dear, and that is what counts more than anything else in the world.”

“My! Won’t she be glad, though!” sighed Betty.

But the little tear-stained Ada, in the beautiful white dress and ribbons which Mrs. Smith-Calvin had dressed her in, did not act glad. She sobbed quietly on and on as though she cared not one bit about being the Sparkling Lady’s child, but wanted only the tired, stooped little mother in her gray calico dress.

## CHAPTER XV

### BETTY MAKES A VISIT

SCHOOL without Ada seemed a lonely place to Betty.

“Do you ’spect Ada’s homesick for me, too?” she asked her grandfather one day. She had stopped in at his shop on her way home from school and was leaning her head listlessly against his blue overall knee.

He pushed aside his work and lifted her to his lap.

“Bless me! I didn’t have an idea you were missing the little tyke like that!” exclaimed Grandpa. “I thought you’d never know a lonely minute after you had your dog Custard.”

“What *is* a tyke, Grandpa?” asked Betty.

Then, without waiting for him to answer, she went on, "I do just love Custard, Grandpa, but I can't take him to school with me and it's then I'm lonesome for Ada, 'specially when recess comes."

"No, you couldn't very well take Custard to school or the children might be singing,

"Betty had a homely pup  
Whose coat was a dark yellow,  
And everywhere that Betty went  
She took the little fellow!"

"Custard isn't homely!" cried Betty.

"She took that pup to school one day,  
Which was against the rule,  
He made the children laugh and play,  
So they turned him out of school!"

teased Grandpa.

"Would they sing verses at me if I took Custard to school?" asked Betty with interest.

"Well, it might not turn out that way, so you'd better not try it," said Grandpa. "And

we'll have to talk to Mother about this Ada business."

At this moment Mrs. Barker came into the shop, carrying an open letter in her hand.

"I've a letter here from Sibyl Smith-Calvin, Father," she said. "It seems that not all of the fine things she's been doing for Ada can make her forget the little old house, her mother and Betty. She cries for all three of them. Sibyl writes that she thinks perhaps if Betty could come there for a week of the vacation that begins on Monday, it might be easier for Ada to adjust herself to her new surroundings."

"Would she have to go alone?" asked Grandpa.

"I could not leave home now," replied Mrs. Barker. "Aunt Martha's had the house on her hands for so long that I want her to have a

rest and so she's going away for a couple of weeks. Yes, she'd have to go alone."

"You've not forgotten Betty's visit all by herself to Aunt Sue, have you? It's farther to the Smith-Calvins and they wouldn't even be relatives. Of course, there's the fact that Betty's been pining for Ada to offset that."

"Betty has?" exclaimed Mrs. Barker, sitting down on a saw-horse. "She's never said one word about it to me. But if she's longing to see Ada it seems to me that settles the matter. Queer though the friendship between those two children has always seemed, it is evidently genuine. Probably Betty won't get homesick with Ada there. Yes, Father, I think we'd better let her go."

"I 'spect Ada'll be awful proud," said Betty, as she sat beside her grandfather in the train with her little suit-case full of only her best clothes in the rack above. Mrs. Smith-Calvin



had said she would come after Ada in the car, but Grandpa had had business in the city and he preferred to take Betty in.

“ I ’spect she won’t be any such thing,” answered Grandpa laughing. “ I ’spect she’ll be so glad to see her dear friend Betty Barker that she’ll forget everything else.”

The Sparkling Lady, very sparkling indeed in a soft blue silk dress which made her eyes look brighter and her cheeks pinker, was at the depot in her big car when Grandpa’s and Betty’s train came in. Beside her sat a little girl in a hand-embroidered green linen dress, with white silk stockings and white kid slippers. She had white silk gloves on her hands and she carried a little green parasol embroidered like her dress. Her reddish hair was bobbed in the very latest style and topped off with an immense bow of white ribbon.

“ Is that Ada? ” whispered Betty to

Grandpa, who had to look twice before he was sure that this little girl was the gingham-clad, none-too-clean little Ada he had known.

“That’s Ada,” he answered, for the turned-up nose and the freckles and the greenish-blue eyes were those of Betty’s old friend.

But she looked so very different from the school friend who had followed her about so admiringly that Betty could not act as though she were Ada and so she said, very stiffly as she would have spoken to a perfectly new little girl whom she had never seen before, “How do you do!”

But Ada saw in the small dark-haired, brown-eyed girl with the white organdie dress, red silk stockings, and red ribbons, the very same Betty Barker who had always been her staunch friend even when other children had laughed at her and been unkind to her.

“Oh, Betty, ain’t it just grand for you to

come visiting me at the Sparkling Lady's?" she cried.

That made Betty see that, after all, it was just Ada. And she answered, as in the other days, "Hello, Ada! It's grand as grand!"

"You're a darling to come, Betty, dear," said the Sparkling Lady. "Now don't you go and get homesick because Ada needs you for the whole week."

"Then I'll stay, anyhow, no matter how homesick I get 'count of Ada needs me," said Betty, snuggling down beside Ada in the big car.

She kept her word, though more than once the same kind of a lump that had come into her throat at Aunt Sue's came again, and the tears had to be winked back many times.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A FAIRY GRANTS THREE WISHES

**B**UT in spite of the lump in her throat that had to be swallowed more than once and the tears that had to be winked back every now and then, it was a glorious week for Betty.

There were so many new and wonderful things to do in Ada's beautiful home that one could forget about Grandpa and Mother and Custard except after one went to bed. Even then there wasn't much time for lumps in the throat or tears in the eyes when right beside you there was another little girl sobbing for a mother whom she could not go home to at the end of the week. By the time Betty got

through comforting Ada both little girls were usually asleep.

One person, however, understood just how brave Betty was about her visit for such a long time all alone away from home. Although Betty had not cried before folks and had said not a word about it to anybody, this person knew every time Betty had a struggle to fight down her homesickness.

This person was the Sparkling Lady.

“ I want to do something for the child before she goes back,” said the Sparkling Lady to her big dark husband. “ Something that she’ll remember. It was Betty Barker who led me to see how wrong it was to speak of a child as impossible and it was she who set me to understanding hearts. If it hadn’t been for her Ada wouldn’t be in our home to-day—oh, you may laugh now, but wait until you see what I can make of even Ada!”

“Darling, you can make anything out of anybody!” laughed the big man tenderly. “Look what you’ve done with me and with yourself in the last few weeks since you’ve gone into this heart-understanding business. As for doing something for Betty, go the limit and I’ll back you in whatever you decide upon.”

The result of this talk made Betty quite sure that every fairy story she had ever heard could very well be true, because in none of them did anything so wonderful happen as that which happened to her.

“To-day we’re going to take a trip in the big car, children,” said the Sparkling Lady on the morning of the last day of Betty’s visit. “To-morrow Betty has to go home, so we shall try to make this the very happiest of all her days here. We’ll take our lunch and make a day of it.”

“A picnic!” cried Betty with dancing eyes.

“My, ain’t that just grand!” exclaimed Ada.

“Say, ‘Isn’t that delightful or pleasant,’ Ada, dear,” corrected the Sparkling Lady gently, while the big man laughed his hearty laugh.

“Isn’t that ’lightful or pleasant,” repeated Ada obediently.

The big man laughed more heartily.

The Sparkling Lady only smiled and said nothing more. She knew that she must go slowly with Ada just now.

Of course a picnic in itself is about as delightful as anything can be. Betty had always thought so and Ada’s dream of delight was a picnic with plenty to eat. But, after all, this picnic dwindled down to something so very small beside the very big thing that happened before they had their lunch—and isn’t that the picnic?—that Betty thought very little of it.

She was altogether too happy to do more than nibble on a small sandwich.

After riding for a long, long distance under big green trees and along side of fields starred with yellow flowers and streaked here and there with purple or red, Mr. Smith-Calvin turned the big cream-colored car into a driveway that made Betty sure they were going to a place like Aunt Sue's, for it surely looked like a farm.

And so it was a farm, but not the same kind as Uncle Bob's and Aunt Sue's.

This was a pony farm!

Imagine what fun it must be to raise little ponies, and nothing but little ponies, instead of cows and pigs and sheep and such ordinary things!

There is no use in trying to repeat what Betty and Ada said when they saw not one pony, but ponies and ponies and ponies.



Wherever they looked there were ponies of every color and size and age. There were even little pony colts and they seemed almost too good to be true—as though they had stepped out of a toy-shop and begun to run about.

“That Betty child is surely going out of her senses!” exclaimed the big man as he watched Betty dance from one pony to another, shrieking with delight.

“No, that’s her way,” replied the Sparkling Lady. “She’s crazy over pets. That’s the chief reason why I decided on this. I hardly dare tell her that she and Ada are each to choose one of the ponies for their very own. Look at even our stiff little Ada. She’s really capering about after something the fashion of Betty. But I do wish she were as graceful as Betty!”

“See what time and your help will do in that respect,” advised Mr. Smith-Calvin. “I’ll tell

the children now because we must be moving on if we are to do all that you have planned for to-day."

"*You* tell them? Indeed not, Robert! I want to myself!" cried the Sparkling Lady.

"Then you shall," answered the big man, smiling down into her violet eyes.

"Betty, if you could have one for your very own which pony would you choose?" asked the Sparkling Lady.

"We've choosed already," answered Betty. "Ada and me always does choose whenever we like anything, just pretending we can have it, you know."

She put her arm around a little brown pony that was nosing at her hand for sugar.

"This is the one I choosed," she said.

"And what if this time the pretending turned out real and you could have that pony for your own?" asked the Sparkling Lady.



"FAIRY, FAIRY, I WISH FOR THIS PONY."—Page 141.



“That’d be like wishes a fairy gives you—making ’em come true, wouldn’t it, Ada?”

“M-mm, and they generally gives three,” said Ada.

“All right, my dears, I’ll be the fairy and you shall have your three wishes,” said the Sparkling Lady. “Betty, you may have the first wish because you’re our guest. Then Ada.”

“Fairy, fairy, I wish for this pony!” cried Betty, bowing low before the beautiful fairy and then throwing her arms around the neck of the little brown pony.

“Fairy, fairy, I want this one!” said Ada.

“Your first wish is granted, my children. The ponies are yours. Now for the other two wishes. I suppose, being the fairy who is to grant your wishes, I should not even hint what they might be. But if I had a pony then I’d

like something so that I could drive him about."

"A cart and a harness!" cried Betty.

"Sure! A cart and harness!" echoed Ada.

"A cart'll be my second wish and a harness my third, fairy," said Betty.

"Me, too!" cried Ada.

"Your wishes are granted, my dears," said the Sparkling Lady. "Are the ones they have chosen all right?" she asked, turning to the big man.

He had been examining the ponies while the second and third wishes were being granted.

"They couldn't have chosen better," he replied. "Now we'll start for the carriage-shop and the harness-maker. Perhaps we'd better eat our lunch in the car so as to save time."

"My, but that was the loveliest game I ever did play!" sighed Betty as they rolled away

from the pony farm in the big cream-colored car.

“ I never played nothin’ so grand neither,” agreed Ada.

“ Darlings, don’t you understand yet that it was more than just a game? ” asked the Sparkling Lady, who was unpacking the lunch. “ The fairy really granted your wishes. Betty’s pony will be sent to her house—perhaps it will be there when she arrives to-morrow. And Ada’s will be sent to our place. Here’s a chicken sandwich and a jelly sandwich for you.”

“ Oh! oh! ” cried Betty, springing up and down for joy.

Then she sank down in the soft cushions, silent but with shining eyes. For once there was nothing to say. Her heart was too full for words. The sandwiches she held untasted in her hand. She could only sit still and think

about the little brown pony and the cart and harness that were to be her very own.

“ Ain’t it grand, Betty? ” said Ada.

“ It’s grand as grand! ” sighed Betty happily.

**THE END**



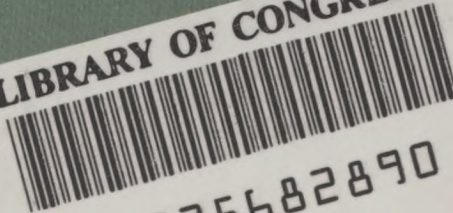






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