



JOEY
AT THE
FAIR
JAMES OTIS



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Books by James Otis

AUNT HANNAH AND SETH.
CHRISTMAS AT DEACON HACKETT'S.
DICK IN THE DESERT.
DOROTHY'S SPY.
HOW THE TWINS CAPTURED A HESSIAN.
HOW TOMMY SAVED THE BARN.
JOEY AT THE FAIR.
OUR UNCLE THE MAJOR.
SHORT CRUISE (A)
WRECK OF THE CIRCUS (THE)

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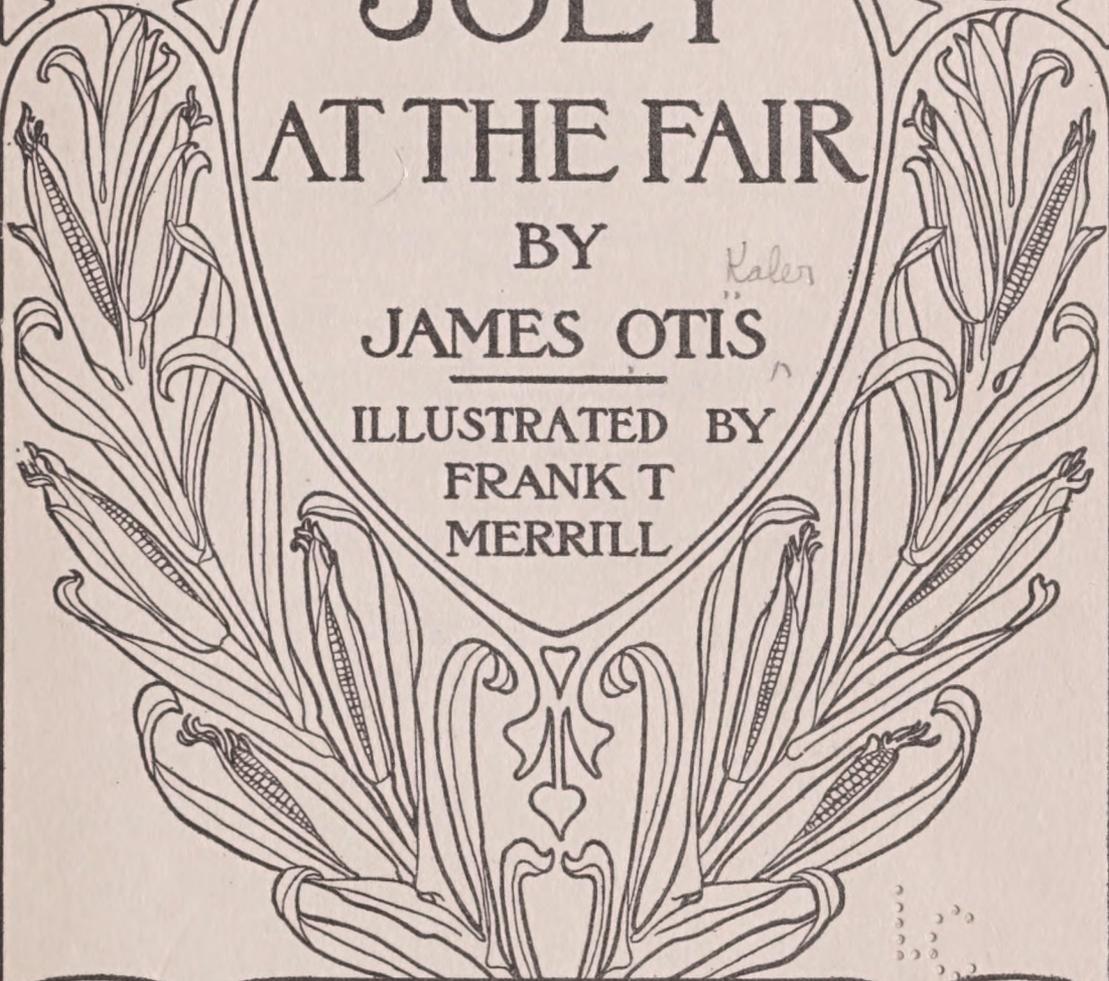
"WHAT DO YOU THINK?" SHE CRIED, BREATHLESS.



JOEY AT THE FAIR

BY
Kaler
JAMES OTIS

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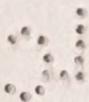
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JOEY AT THE FAIR.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHEME.

“THERE’S no mistake but that Joey’s calf promises to make as likely a heifer as has been seen in this town for many a day,” Deacon Jonas Crawford said as he brought into the house two full pails of milk, giving them into the hands of his wife with an air of pride, much as if believing he, not the cows, should be credited with such a bountiful supply.

“But poor little Joey had to do a deal of coaxin’ before you’d consent to his raisin’ the calf,” his wife replied as she made ready to strain the milk into tin pans which shone bright as silver, for Aunt Jane Crawford was noted far and wide, and justly, too, for being the neatest, most industrious housewife to be found in the village of Baldwin.

“I know it, mother, I know it, for if there’s

anything 'round a farm that will keep things littered up, an' try a man's temper 'way down to the breaking point, it's a calf. But Joey has stuck to his end of the bargain straight as a string, an' he's got the best lookin' yearlin' I've seen since Abel Harkins beat us all out at the Topsham fair."

Then Deacon Crawford seated himself on the broad stone doorstep, under the shade of the maple tree, that he might rest from the fatigue of the August day. The deacon had much for which to be thankful, although he ever kept in mind the old proverb that "Heaven helps those who help themselves;" he owned one of the best farms in the county, and people declared that he had been "monstrous lucky, for it was worn out when he took it." The deacon and his wife believed in hard work rather than luck, and by dint of much labor had made of Hillside farm a property in which one might well take pride.

Joey, the elder of the two children, was thirteen years of age that very August, and the calf of which the deacon had spoken in praise, was his birthday present twelve months before. As his father had dealt by the "worn-out farm," so Joey had dealt by the first animal he ever owned, and even as the deacon was speaking, he stood in

one corner of the south pasture, grooming his pet whose red coat shone like silk under the rays of the setting sun.

Sadie, Joey's sister, who was nearly two years younger than her brother, had been learning to "turn the heel" of a stocking, during the leisure time after supper, and, as a matter of course, heard all that her father and mother had to say about the calf.

It seemed useless to sit there with the knitting in her hands while her mother was taking care of the milk, for she knew by past experience that a full half-hour would be required for the task, and, slipping softly down from her chair, she laid the yarn and needles on the shelf which had been put up especially for her belongings. Then she went out of the wide door, stopping an instant to pat her father's brown cheek and hear him call her his "blessing," after which her little pug nose was turned in the direction of the south pasture, she knowing full well Joey would be there petting the calf.

"What do you think?" she cried, breathless from having run so fast. "Father says you've got the best calf he's seen for many a day!"

"An' that's only the truth," Joey cried as he pressed his cheek against the animal's damp nose.

“She’s not only the best, but the handsomest that can be found in this town !”

“That’s what father said, or, if he didn’t use the very words, it meant the same thing. He told mother she was the best looking yearling he had seen since Mr. Harkins took so many prizes at the Topsham fair,” and Sadie leaned over the bars to pat Betty’s sleek neck.

“Did he really say that, Sarah Crawford ?” Joey cried, showing more excitement than seemed warranted by the statement she had made.

“Of course he did, else I wouldn’t have come out here. I knew you’d be glad to hear what he thought about Betty, so ran off while mother was straining the milk.”

Joey stood as if in deep thought for a moment, and then cried suddenly, in the tone of one who has settled some grave question in his own mind :

“Do you know what I’m goin’ to do, Sadie ? I’ve fixed it with myself to enter Betty for a prize at the Topsham fair !”

“Betty at the fair ?” Sadie cried in astonishment.

“Why not ? If father says she’s the best lookin’ yearlin’ he’s seen since Mr. Harkins took so many prizes, why shouldn’t she go ?”

“I don’t suppose there *is* any reason, only it

seems such a great thing to expect of Betty, that she should win a prize."

"Well, you see, she hasn't *got* to take it if she can't; but I don't know of any calf around here that can beat her."

"But at the Topsham fair they bring cattle from all over the county, and most likely there are a great many calves that you haven't seen," Sadie said in a tone which sounded much like one of apology for having even hinted that Betty might not receive the prize.

"That's a fact; but everybody praises her, an' if she's handsome to the people 'round here who know what good cattle are, then there's a chance other folks might think the same thing," and Joey brushed energetically at the tuft of hair between the lumps on Betty's head where horns would soon begin to show themselves.

Sadie was so nearly overwhelmed with astonishment at the idea of sending the pet away, with the possibility of having her pronounced the best in the county by those who are supposed to know all the good as well as the bad points of a cow, that she really could not discuss the matter, and, after brushing imaginary specks of dust here or there from Betty's coat, Joey clambered over the bars, as he said :

“ We’ll go straight to father, an’ find out what he thinks of sendin’ her to the fair.”

“ Perhaps he’ll be willing to put her with the oxen he said he is going to send there,” Sadie said half to herself as she walked by the side of her brother, finding it difficult to keep pace with him because of his eagerness to get his father’s opinion of the scheme.

“ But that’s what I don’t want !” Joey cried sharply. “ If Betty goes to Topsham, it’ll be all by herself, an’ not with any of father’s stock !”

“ Why not ?” and Sadie looked up in surprise.

“ Folks say that Deacon Crawford always has the best stock in Baldwin, an’ they might give her the prize only because she belonged to him. If Betty is good enough for them to say she’s the best, I want her to earn all she gets, an’ not slip through with father’s oxen.”

Then Joey quickened his pace until Sadie was really forced to run in order to keep step with him, and when the two arrived at the farmhouse Deacon Crawford was yet on the stone step resting.

“ Father, would you be willin’ for me to take Betty to Topsham fair ?” Joey asked abruptly, and his father said with a smile :

“ Do you know, son, I was thinkin’ this very minute that she was good enough to go there !”

“Were you?” Joey cried in delight. “Then you’d be willin’ for me to enter her?”

“Wouldn’t you care to have her go in with the oxen?” the deacon asked thoughtfully.

“I’d rather she went alone, an’ under my name. Then if she *did* take the prize, it wouldn’t be because of what you might have there,” Joey said decidedly, and Aunt Jane, who had come to the door in time to hear the conversation, added approvingly :

“He’s right, father. The calf is his, an’ should be sent under his name.”

“Do you know what it’ll cost, Joey, to get her in, figurin’ on everything that’ll be needed?”

“Do you have to pay for sendin’ things to the fair?” Joey asked in surprise.

“You must spend some money to make her look her best, an’ then there’s the matter of feed. I can’t say jest how much it would amount to; but at a rough guess, reckonin’ for three days there, it wouldn’t fall short of two dollars.”

Joey was silent for a moment, as if making some mental calculation, and then he said :

“It’s worth it to let folks see what can be done with a calf if you treat her right. I’ll spend that much on Betty out of the money I was savin’ for our trip to the city!”

“Very well, son, I’ve got nothin’ to say against it. You earn every cent of the two dollars a month I pay you for workin’ on the farm, an’ if you’re willin’ to put it out on the calf, it’s your business. I’ll have to be there pretty much all the time, if I enter the oxen, an’ had kind’er made up my mind that it wouldn’t do any harm if I took the whole family all three days, so you won’t be bothered ’bout gettin’ there to look after her.”

There is no necessity of saying that Sadie and her mother were considerably excited by the prospect of having so many holidays, for in the years that were past Deacon Crawford had seemingly believed it a waste of time to spend more than one day at the county fair, and Mrs. Crawford was quite as eager as the children to make plans for the unusual event, even though it was nearly two weeks in the future.

“If you learn how to turn a heel, as little girls of your age did in my day, an’ take very great pains with the knittin’, there’s no reason why you shouldn’t put in a pair of stockin’s. It would be fine to walk through the big hall an’ see a card sayin’, ‘To Sarah Crawford; best specimen of knittin’ by a child eleven years old. First award.’”

“And do you really think I might do it?”

Sadie, asked eagerly, while Joey wondered how it was his mother and sister could think of such ordinary things as stockings, when Betty was going to Topsham as a probable prize-winner.

“There is no reason why you shouldn’t, Sarah,” Aunt Jane replied, giving the child her full name because she did not approve of contracting it to “Sadie,” although why she did not rule the same in regard to Joey, and call him “Joseph,” no one could say. “You knit very well now—”

“Father is willing to wear the stockings I make,” Sadie interrupted, and the deacon said with a laugh, as he pulled the child’s face down until it rested against his rough cheek :

“Indeed I am, sweetheart, an’ right glad to get ’em.”

“I do think, father, that it is wrong to give such names to a girl eleven years old,” Aunt Jane said, trying in vain to summon a severe expression to her placid face.

“Nonsense, mother, she always has been my sweetheart, an’ I hope she’ll never be ashamed to hear her father call her so.”

“Indeed I shan’t,” Sadie whispered, as she rubbed her face against the deacon’s rough chin until one cheek was flaming red, and then she sat up very primly as the sound of wheels in the

distance told that some one was coming along the dusty road which wound like a yellow ribbon to the railroad station, and thence to Topsham.

“It’s Jeddiah Wilkins, I reckon,” Deacon Crawford said in a low tone. “He went by an hour or more ago, an’ allowed he might stop at the post-office.”

“Hello, deacon!” came a voice from the road which, near the gate of the Crawford home, was partially hidden by trees. “I’ve got a letter here for you, an’ ’cordin’ to the looks of it I should say it was sent by some of your folks in the city. It smells a good deal like the hair oil ’Liakum Byard is so fond of usin’”.

Deacon Crawford went to the gate, where he remained several moments talking with Mr. Wilkins, and meanwhile Aunt Jane and the two children were literally burning with curiosity to know who had sent a letter with such a peculiar odor.

“It isn’t very often we idle time away as we’ve been doin’ this evenin’, an’ it does seem as if your father might gossip with the neighbors when we ain’t visitin’ with him, so to speak,” Mrs. Crawford said mildly, and before either of the children could reply the deacon came up the walk, holding

very gingerly in the tips of his fingers a letter which gave forth the odor of perfume.

“It’s from Maryann—or *Mariee*, as she calls herself since John made a lot of money,” Deacon Crawford said with a laugh, as he gave the letter to his wife and then lifted Sadie to his knee. “Let’s hear what has come over her. It must be nigh to three years since she showed any signs of rememberin’ that we were alive, an’ then pretty much all she wrote was about my foolishness in takin’ up with such a worn-out farm as this. I wonder what she’d think of it now?”

“Jonas Crawford, you ought to be ashamed of speakin’ so about your only sister, an’ that right before your own children!”

“I have always made it a rule never to say anything that my own children can’t hear,” the deacon replied cheerily. “When Maryann got the idee that her mother’s name wasn’t good enough for her, an’ must be changed to *Mariee*, I came to believe she shouldn’t be held up as an example to my little sweetheart.”

“I do wish you wouldn’t talk that way,” Aunt Jane said with a very thin sigh which seemed ashamed of itself for having come from such a contented-looking face. “Your sister hasn’t written much of a letter; but just enough to let

us know that she an' her boy Rupert are comin' down to make us a visit, an'—an'—Bless my heart! Let me see. To-day's Tuesday— Why, Jonas Crawford, she'll be here Thursday mornin,' an' me with only one day to get ready for her!"

"Now see here, mother," the deacon said soothingly, "there ain't the least little reason why you should get flustered over Maryann's comin'. I've never seen the time since I was married, when my home didn't look fit for the King of England to walk into, an' I'll venture to say John Stockbridge can't tell the same story, for Maryann never was a great hand at sprucin' up, except when company was comin', though she may have changed her ways the same time she did her name, but I misdoubt it. If she wants to come an' see us, I'll be glad to have her; but you shan't fetch an' carry from now till she gets here, tryin' to find dirt where there hasn't been any since the children were old enough to keep out of the mud."

It is doubtful if Aunt Jane heard half the deacon said, so intent was she on running over in her mind the work which it seemed necessary should be done before Mrs. Stockbridge arrived, and Joey whispered to Sadie:

"Rupert! I wonder if the boys call him Roop?"

"Why, Joey, they wouldn't call him that, be-

cause it sounds too much like the name of the sickness that killed off so many of the chickens last spring," Sadie said with a warning shake of her head, as she slipped down from her father's arms.

"There was a city boy over to Mr. Wilkins' farm last summer, that was worse on the chickens than any case of roup you ever heard tell about, an' this one may be as bad," Joey replied gloomily.

"Why, he's your very own cousin, and how can you say such things about him?"

"Well, I wish he wasn't comin', that's what I wish. I'll need to spend a lot of time on Betty, if she's goin' to Topsham in two weeks, an' as likely as not he'll want me to go all over the neighborhood with him."

"Of course he will, Joseph Crawford, and you will be just as polite to him as you know how, because he's your cousin. I'll see that you have time enough to attend to Betty."

"How'll you fix it?" Joey asked, still disposed to look upon the coming of Master Rupert as something unpleasant.

"I can take him out to walk once in a while, or show him the pigeons, and the chickens. How do you know but he'll be glad to help you with Betty? When he sees what a handsome calf she

is, he can't prevent himself from liking her almost as much as we do."

This was a view of the case which had not presented itself to Joey; but now that Sadie had suggested it, he believed there was no question but that Master Rupert would immediately fall in love with Betty, for how could he do otherwise?

With this matter settled so satisfactorily in their own minds, the children turned their attention to the conversation of their parents relative to that which must be done on the morrow, and of a verity Aunt Jane was mapping out an enormous day's work.

"You'd better kill three or four chickens the first thing in the mornin', father, so that I can dress them as soon as breakfast is over. Sadie ought to be able to sweep and dust the fore room, while I'm settin' the spare chamber to rights, an' Joey can clean the knives an' forks; it hasn't been done properly for more than a week—"

"I was countin' on takin' Joey into the west field; that onion bed is almost the same as cryin' to be 'tended to. It'll be all right 'bout the chickens; but I've laid out quite a heft of work for to-morrow, an' it must be done. If we're goin' to whiffle away three whole days at the fair, it behooves us to be up an' doin' till then."

“But this is your own sister who’s comin’ to make us a visit, Jonas Crawford, an’ it’s the first time in her life she was ever here, so the farm work must be put off till she gets settled down, so to speak,” and Aunt Jane’s tone was most decided.

“Well, well, mother, if you’re so set on it, I reckon it’ll have to be as you say, though it does seem a pity to be whiffin’ ’round the house when there’s so much that’s almost reg’larly achin’ to be done.”

Aunt Jane made no reply; she was so deeply engrossed with her plans as to how a full week’s work could be done in one day, that it is doubtful if she heard what the deacon said.

Under ordinary circumstances Joey would have been really excited by the prospect of showing the farm and all it contained, to a cousin whom he had never seen; but the thought of sending Betty to the fair, and the possibility that she might bring home as a prize the blue ribbon, was so entrancing that he speedily dismissed from his mind everything which did not have a direct bearing upon the matter.

Deacon Crawford was speculating upon the possibility of hiring at least one more man to work on the farm during such time as it might

be necessary for him to take some part in entertaining the expected guests, while Sadie was wondering if it would be really possible for her to knit a pair of stockings sufficiently well to warrant their being shown at the fair, and therefore it was that Aunt Jane almost startled her family as she said abruptly :

“It’s time every one of us was in bed ! If we count on settin’ this house to rights in one day, we must be stirrin’ early, an’ we’ll need all the rest that can be had.”

“I reckon we’d best scurry off, youngsters, seein’s your mother has set her heart on scrubbin’ an’ cleanin’ when there’s nothin’ to be done,” the deacon said laughingly as he rose to his feet. “It ain’t likely your Aunt Mariee will stay any very great while, ’cause it won’t be lively enough here to suit her, an’ the visit needn’t make any change in our plans for the fair, unless we spend too much of our time tryin’ to amuse her.”

“I’ll have to look after Betty pretty snug, if she’s goin’ to Topsham, so Roop mustn’t think I’m bound to tag ’round after him all the time,” Joey said half to himself as he followed Sadie into the house, and his sister, understanding much of what was in his mind, stopped to whisper :

“Don’t worry, Joey. Betty shan’t be neg-

lected, no matter how much company we have, for I'll spend all my spare time helping you make her look fine, and if brushing and combing are all that's needed for her to win the blue ribbon, you shall bring it home from Topsham."

CHAPTER II.

A MISHAP.

THE sun had given no hint of rising, next morning, when Aunt Jane called the members of the household, and there was that in her tones which told Joey very plainly it would not be well for him to linger in bed even for a moment.

“Why, you must have stayed up all night!” he said as he entered the kitchen to find breakfast already on the table, and his mother replied as she plunged her hands into a huge pan of flour:

“I’m so worried for fear things won’t look just as they should, Joey, that I couldn’t sleep after midnight. Take right hold an’ eat, son, for I want to get the breakfast things cleared away as early as I can.”

“Ain’t you goin’ to sit down?” Joey asked, feeling in a certain sense bewildered by the manner in which his mother darted from one thing to another, as if trying to crowd the work of ten minutes into two.

“Your father an’ I had breakfast half an hour ago ; he’s out in the barn now, an’ I expect he’ll be back before I’m anywhere near ready to take care of the milk.”

“Why didn’t you waken me before ?” Joey asked reproachfully, as he plunged his head into a basin of cool water. “I don’t like for him to do my share of the work, an’ he’ll have to feed the stock before he can milk.”

“You are up early enough, son, an’ perhaps I was foolish to rouse your father so soon ; but there is so much work to be done, with *such* a little while in which to do it !”

By this time Sadie had made her appearance, and from that moment, until very late in the evening, the Crawford family were as busy as bees, hardly stopping, as the deacon said, “to draw a long breath.”

Then, for a moment before retiring, they gathered, as was their custom, on the broad stone step, and the deacon said as he looked anxiously toward Aunt Jane :

“You must be all tired out, mother, for I don’t believe you’ve sat down once to-day—not even when you had your meals.”

“I’ve been too busy to think whether I was tired or not,” Aunt Jane replied as if her thoughts

were elsewhere. "I only wish I knew if everything was all right."

"Well, I can tell you now an' here that there wasn't a speck of dirt to be seen when you began, an' I'm certain there isn't even the shadow of one now. I only wish the onion bed was in as good shape as this house is. Have you had a chance to see Betty to-day, son?"

"Indeed I have, for from now on I must look after her sharp. If she don't bring away the blue ribbon it'll be my fault, an' I won't take any chances on that. I've been wonderin' whether it wouldn't be a good idea to keep her in the barn half of every day, so I can give her a little grain?"

"It wouldn't be a bad plan to bring her in nights, an' turn her out about noon," the deacon replied thoughtfully, and then it appeared much as if he was ready to give Joey the benefit of his experience in fitting cattle for the fair; but Aunt Jane put an end to anything of the kind, by insisting that the family retire without further loss of time.

Quite by accident, when he read the evening lesson, the deacon opened the Bible at that chapter in which Isaiah admonishes Hezekiah to set his house in order, and Joey was not certain that his

father did not emphasize the words a trifle more than was absolutely necessary, but he had little time in which to speculate upon it, for within a very few minutes after getting into bed, he began to dream of a series of mishaps which prevented Betty from winning the blue ribbon to which she was clearly entitled.

It was necessary Aunt Jane call more than once next morning, before her family was awakened, and, as on the day previous, breakfast was eaten by candle-light, a fact that caused Deacon Crawford to say with a sly wink at Sadie, that it would have saved time had they partaken of the meal before going to bed.

Joey, whose first thought on awakening was of Betty, hastened to the pasture at the first leisure moment, and brought the possible blue-ribbon winner into the stable, where he gave her a bed of clean straw, a generous feed of barley, and a careful combing from the tip of her brown nose to the end of her tail.

Then he hurried back to the house to dress himself in his best suit of clothes, for, according to the program Aunt Jane had mapped out, both he and his father were to meet the guests at the station.

Simon, the plow-horse, had already been

harnessed into the double-seated wagon, and was standing near the kitchen door, nibbling here and there at the clover leaves which grew on the borders of the flower-beds, while Deacon Crawford was struggling with a particularly stiff collar which obstinately refused to be buttoned, when a drove of pigs came down the road driven by half a dozen boys.

Never since his first birthday, twenty or more years before, had Simon been known to show fear of anything, and although the pig-drivers made noise enough to have frightened five or six ordinary horses, no member of the Crawford family gave any heed to him, for it seemed as improbable the old fellow would run away as that the stone hitching-post could have danced a jig.

The deacon was still struggling with his collar ; Joey was putting an extra polish on the heels of his shoes, which had been neglected when he applied the first coat of blacking, while Aunt Jane and Sadie were in the parlor making certain no speck of dust had escaped them, when three or four of the pigs rushed into the yard grunting and squealing, and ran directly between Simon's legs.

The old horse pricked up his ears and stepped about uneasily ; yet might have remained where

he was but for the boys, three or four of whom ran into the yard, brandishing long sticks and yelling at the full strength of their lungs at the frightened pigs.

Then it was that Simon forgot how old and stiff in the joints he was. With a snort of fear he turned suddenly around as if to go back to the stable, and, as a matter of course, overturning the wagon, just as the boys came toward him swiftly with their long sticks held high in the air. Nothing more was needed to plunge him into a panic, and before one could have counted five, he was galloping up the road at a pace which he probably never equalled even in his coltish days.

“Jonas! Jonas Crawford! That horse is runnin’ away!” Aunt Jane cried from the parlor as Simon went past the window, head and tail up, the front wheels of the wagon rising and falling with every frantic leap.

“Let the folks attend to their own horses; I can’t bother with anything till after this collar is buttoned. There, I do believe it’s comin’ all—”

“But it’s your horse, Jonas! It’s old Simon that’s runnin’ up the road like all possessed, with only part of the wagon!” Aunt Jane cried frantically, and the deacon replied in a soothing tone:

“Now, now, mother, don’t fret yourself ’bout Simon. He’s out there by the kitchen door nibblin’ grass, an’ you couldn’t coax him to go off on his own account. It needs a good stout whip to make him move faster’n a walk—”

“He has gone up the road!” Aunt Jane shrieked as she ran into the bedroom where the deacon, having succeeded in fastening the collar, was looking at it in the glass with great satisfaction. “Look out there, an’ you’ll see all that’s left of the wagon!”

Aunt Jane drew aside the curtain, which had been pulled down that inquisitive flies might be discouraged from entering, and as the deacon gazed at the wreck which had worked havoc among the flower-beds, he exclaimed in surprise and bewilderment :

“Now who’d a’ thought it? I didn’t believe anything short of a reg’lar earthquake would ever have started that horse!”

“Ain’t you goin’ after him?” Aunt Jane asked sharply. “Or do you count on standin’ here lookin’ into the yard while your only sister’s roastin’ nearly to death down at the depot?”

“Well, mother, seein’s how the train ain’t due to get in for more’n an hour, I don’t reckon

Maryann's doin' much roastin' yet awhile. Help me get this collar off again, an' I'll see where the old horse has gone."

"Why don't you stop to change *all* your clothes?" Aunt Jane asked curtly, and but for the fact that she was noted for her good temper, one might have thought her patience had been exhausted.

"I couldn't walk from here to Harkins's with that hot collar huggin' close around my neck, an' I reckon Simon has done about all the mischief he can by this time."

Sadie, meanwhile, had run into the shed to warn Joey of what had happened, and he dashed out of the yard at full speed just as his father succeeded in removing the collar which had cost him so much labor to put on.

Aunt Jane, now that Joey had gone in pursuit of Simon, gave over trying to quicken the deacon's movements, and went out to repair, so far as might be possible in a limited time, the damage done to the flower-beds; but before very much could be effected in that direction it was necessary the wreck of the wagon be removed, and this her husband set about doing as soon as he had taken off his "Sunday clothes."

"It looks a good deal as if Simon had been

tryin' to make up for never havin' been coltish before," he said laughingly as he up-turned the remnants of the wagon. "I reckon Maryann won't get here in quite as much style as I was countin' on swingin' for her benefit ; Joey an' I will have to hook into the baggage cart, which is so old an' shaky that it ain't really what you might call in good taste."

"You are terribly tryin' at times, Jonas Crawford !" Aunt Jane exclaimed as she ceased work to look up at her husband with as severe an expression on her face as the placid features would permit. "How do we know when Joey will get back with that provokin' old Simon, an' your sister waitin' for you at the depot ?"

"It won't be hard to figger on about when Joey'll turn up, for there he comes down the road now, an' Simon is hangin' his head as if he was too far gone with age to get one foot before the other. If I ain't at the depot when Maryann comes in, she'll have to wait, unless some of the neighbors happen along, which ain't likely at this time of the day when the weeds are growin' so fast you can almost see 'em move. Well, Joey ?" the deacon added, raising his voice. "How much did you find ?"

"Pretty near all Simon took away with him,"

Betty's young master cried cheerily. "I reckon you've got the best part of the wagon there."

"There's a good deal here, son, but I'm doubtful about there bein' any best part left. We'll need a new cart if we count on bringin' home Betty's blue ribbon."

"How can you laugh an' joke at such a time as this, Deacon Crawford?" and there was no question now but that Aunt Jane spoke sternly. "For my part, I feel more like cryin'."

"An' tears wouldn't do you a little mite of good, mother. Don't you worry 'bout my haulin' Maryann up from the depot in good season."

"Where did the pigs go?" Joey asked.

"I haven't seen any pigs," the deacon replied in mild surprise. "What have pigs to do with Simon's showin' himself off in this style?"

"That's what frightened the horse," Aunt Jane hastened to explain. "Now let Sarah help Joey harness Simon into the baggage wagon, if that's the best team you can send for your sister, an' while they're doin' it you'd better put on your good clothes again."

To this the deacon agreed, after giving Joey explicit instructions as to the harness he should use in the stead of the one which had been broken in many places, and Aunt Jane urged the children

to perform their task as quickly as possible lest the train arrive before the wagon was at the station.

Joey learned where some of the pigs were, very shortly after entering the stable. He had led Simon to the door of the harness room just as Sadie joined him, and was about to get that which was needed, when a great clatter arose from the vicinity of Betty's stall, sounding much as if the calf was trying to break loose.

"Hold Simon!" Joey cried to his sister. "Somethin' is worryin' Betty, an' she may spoil all her chances of goin' to the fair if that kind of a rumpus lasts very long."

Even as Joey spoke the grunting and squealing of pigs could be heard, accompanied by the pounding of hoofs against the partition, and Joey cried excitedly as he ran swiftly:

"Some of those pigs have got in there! Take Simon into the stall, else he may run away again!"

Sadie did her best to obey the order quickly, but before she could persuade Simon to follow her, out dashed three pigs, squealing wildly, and headed directly for the old horse.

This was too much for Simon's nerves, and, flinging up his head, he pulled the bridle from Sadie's hands, after which he galloped out of the

stable at even a better pace than when he wrecked the wagon.

“Oh dear! Oh dear! Whatever shall we do?” Sadie cried in distress. “He’s gone again, and now Aunt Marie will surely come before you can get to the depot.”

“I don’t care if we never get there!” Joey cried tearfully. “Here’s Betty hangin’ by the neck to the stanchion, an’ I wouldn’t wonder if some of her bones were broken! Can’t you get father to come an’ help me?”

Aunt Jane, working among the flowers to repair the mischief done when the wagon was overturned, heard the clatter of hoofs as Simon came tearing down the lane, gave one terrified glance at the horse, and then, gathering up her skirts, ran more swiftly than she had done for years, toward the open door of the kitchen as she cried angrily:

“It’s that miserable horse again. He must have gone crazy, Jonas Crawford, an’ there you stand fiddlin’ with your collar, when for all we know, both the children may be killed!”

The deacon saw Simon coming at a furious pace from the stable, and Aunt Jane’s words aroused him to action on the instant. He leaped out of the bedroom window, giving no heed to the fact that in so doing he tore down one of the

curtains, and succeeded in catching the frightened horse as his wife started toward the stable, calling upon first Sarah and then Joey.

“I never did beat a dumb brute because he’d been scared ; but it would do me a world of good to lay the whip on you soundly,” the deacon said as he turned the old horse stableward once more, and then he heard Sadie cry :

“Oh father, the pigs have frightened Betty, an’ Joey wants you to help him, because she’s hanging by the neck to the stanchion !”

“Well I declare, if it don’t seem as if the whole farm had gone wild !” the deacon muttered to himself as he pulled old Simon along without succeeding in forcing him to a faster pace than a walk. “Maryann’s comin’ has upset things for a fact, an’ if she stirs up half as much of a fuss after she gets here, we’re likely to be disturbed before her visit comes to an end.”

Aunt Jane was leading Sadie back to the house as if afraid to trust the child out of her sight, when she met her husband, and said tartly :

“If you try to put on that collar of yours once more, Jonas Crawford, there won’t be any use of goin’ to the depot, for your sister will have come an’ gone. If you can get a horse harnessed, don’t run the risk of tryin’ to dress up.”

The deacon made some reply, but not in a tone sufficiently loud to admit of his wife's hearing the words, and then, fastening Simon securely to the gate-post, he hurried on to Joey's assistance.

The boy had succeeded in releasing Betty from her uncomfortable position before his father arrived, and was examining her from head to tail, fearing lest she had been seriously injured.

“Any harm done, son?”

“I can't make out that Betty's hurt much; but she's been knocked around till her coat is covered with dirt,” and Joey began rubbing the calf with a bunch of hay.

“If that's the worst we won't cry very much, son,” the deacon said cheerily. “A curry-comb and brush, with plenty of elbow grease, will soon put her in as good shape as ever. It looks to me as if you'd come pretty near spoilin' your Sunday clothes.”

“I tumbled over the pigs when I first came in, an'—”

“Look here, Joey, all of you have been talkin' 'bout pigs, an' I haven't seen so much as a bristle. Where did they come from?”

Joey gave his father all the information he had on the subject, concluding by saying:

“There must be as many as three runnin'

'round the farm this very minute, an' if they ain't driven out there'll be mischief done. Why don't you go to the depot alone, an' leave me at home to look after things? It would take me as much as an hour to fix up in what mother'd think was decent shape."

"I'm afraid, Joey, that neither you nor I will cut any very fine figger when your aunt gets here, no matter how much we scurry around, for it's gettin' close to time for the train. If your mother thinks it will be all right for you to stay at home, instead of goin' to meet your cousin, it'll be a good idee to get rid of those pigs before they drive us out of house an' home. Now help me pull the baggage wagon out, an' I'll send Simon down the road as fast as he ever went before, to pay him for bein' such a fool as to get scared at a lot of pigs."

"Even at that you won't go very fast, unless you can manage to scare the old fellow," Joey said laughingly as he pulled the wagon out of the shed, and although the two worked as rapidly as possible, there remained, when they drove up to the kitchen door, hardly more than fifteen minutes before the train should arrive.

"I've got to go as I am, mother, an' Joey is so kind'er draggled that I reckon he'd best stay at

home," the deacon said as Simon came to a full stop, much as though he never intended to move again.

"Mercy sakes, Jonas Crawford, what will people say if they see you lookin' like that?" Aunt Jane cried ruefully.

"I can't tell you exactly what they will say, mother; but I know that if I try to get into my best clothes again, an' especially that collar, there'll be good reason for Maryann to be a little nervous before I get there."

"Did you know you pulled down the bedroom curtain when you jumped out of the window?"

"You ought'er be thankful I didn't pull down more'n that, mother, for I was just a shade excited; but what about leavin' Joey at home?"

"He can't go where he'll see people until he has changed his clothes, an' that's the truth," Aunt Jane said decidedly, whereupon the deacon began trying to start Simon, as he said with a laugh:

"If that's the case, I'll be movin'. We haven't got more'n fifteen minutes, an' it's a strong mile from here to the depot."

Simon finally consented to move, and Sadie asked as Joey began to wash his face and hands:

"Is Betty hurt any?"

"I can't see that she is; but she looks as if

there'd never been a curry-comb or a brush on this farm. The worst of it is that the pigs are around here somewhere, an' I've got to find 'em before father gets back."

"But mother will expect you to dress up before Aunt Marie comes."

"It seems to me that mother has seen enough of what those pigs can do, to be willin' I'd look any way, rather than have 'em raisin' more mischief; but if she says the word, of course I'll let everything go except Betty. *She* must be kept away from trouble, no matter what kind of a muss my clothes are in when Aunt Marie an' Roop get here."

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL.

AUNT Jane was sorely perplexed when Joey stood before her asking if he should leave the farm to the mercy of the pigs, in order to appear at his best so far as cleanliness and clothing went.

“Of course your father expects you to prevent the pigs from doing any more mischief; but I’d be ashamed of my life to have you lookin’ so dirty an’ disreputable when your aunt an’ cousin gets here,” and Aunt Jane gazed dreamily out of the window as if thinking she might see among the hollyhocks some solution to the problem. “Do you know where they are?”

“Down to the depot by this time, I reckon.”

“Then you’ve already driven ’em away?”

“Who are you talkin’ about, mother?” Joey asked in perplexity.

“Why the pigs, of course.”

“Oh, they are somewhere ’round the stable, I s’pose, unless they ran out into the road after

scarin' Simon the second time," Joey replied quickly, eager to take such steps as might be necessary to protect Betty from the stray animals.

"Sarah an' I'll keep a sharp look-out for them till your father gets back, an' then he may say what shall be done. Clean your clothes as well as you can, an' make haste, for your aunt should be here in half an hour."

"But, mother, I must look after Betty first. Because of helpin' father harness Simon, I didn't have time to make certain the pigs weren't hidin' somewherè in the stable."

"Shut the calf in where nothin' can trouble her, an' then attend to yourself," Aunt Jane said hurriedly, for the thought had just come into her mind that the custard pies she was intending to have for dinner should be put out by the well to cool, otherwise they would not be in proper condition.

Joey hurried back to the stable, fastened securely the door leading to that part of the building where Betty was quartered, after making certain none of the pigs were lurking in the stalls, and otherwise did what he could in a very short time toward preventing the possibility of further mischief.

Then he went back to the house, observing as he passed the kitchen window that his mother had placed her custard pies on the bench in the well-house. With no slight assistance from Sadie, he cleaned his clothing, blackened his boots for the third time, and was looking really wholesome and cheery when Simon walked leisurely into the yard, hauling the baggage wagon in which were the guests.

Joey and Sadie stood on the broad, stone step, half concealed by the woodbine which covered the kitchen porch, when their father drove up to the front door, open on this day for the first time since the sewing circle had met at Hillside farm, and saw a fashionably dressed lady step gingerly down from the baggage wagon with an expression of dissatisfaction and impatience on her face.

“I guess she had to wait at the depot, an’ it hasn’t made her feel very good,” Joey whispered, and Sadie added :

“Will you look at the trunks ! She must be expecting to stay all the rest of the summer. Three big ones ! Why the spare chamber isn’t large enough to hold them all ?”

“There’s Roop, an’ jest look at that watch-chain ! My, my, but he’s dressed fine,” and in-

voluntarily Joey glanced down at his own clothing.

“Where are the children, mother?” Deacon Crawford cried cheerily. “I reckon Maryann will be wantin’ to see them the first thing.”

Mrs. Stockbridge did not appear eager for anything just then, except to get out of the sunlight; but Aunt Jane immediately called Joey and Sarah, who obeyed the summons shyly, therefore appearing decidedly at a disadvantage.

“So these are your children, Jonas?” Mrs. Stockbridge said, with the curtest of curt glances at the two who were standing hand in hand near their mother’s side. “Very interesting, no doubt; but I have such a terrible headache from sitting so long in the sun at that wretched station, that it is almost impossible for me to see anything.”

Then she stepped into the cool-looking parlor, and Master Rupert, who had remained in the baggage wagon during this short interview, clambered out as if, so Joey thought, he wanted his cousins to have a good view of himself.

“You’ll have to take Rupert under your wing, Joey,” Deacon Crawford said cheerily as he began to pull the trunks from the wagon. “He tells me he was never on a farm before, an’ I

reckon you can show him a good bit that'll look strange."

"Let me help you with the trunks, father," and Joey ran to the rear of the wagon as if glad to escape from the scrutiny of his cousin. "They look heavy."

"So they are, son, an' if I hadn't had some help down at the depot, I ain't certain as I could have got 'em into the wagon. Do you allow we two can manage 'em?"

"I ought to be able to handle one end," Joey said as he looked toward Rupert, fancying that young gentleman would offer to do what he might; but the visitor stood on the threshold of the door gazing curiously at the relatives whom he had never seen before, without seeming to think it would be well to aid in the task.

Sadie did her feeble best to help, and after much tugging and pulling, the heavy trunks were carried into the spare chamber, Deacon Crawford wiping the perspiration from his face as he said, when he was out of doors once more:

"I declare, I'd rather work half a day hayin', than handle them 'ere trunks; it *was* a job, an' no mistake!"

"I'll take care of Simon, father, an' you can

go into the house," Joey said eagerly as he leaped into the wagon, and the deacon cried before the old horse could be urged to move :

"Take Rupert with you ; I reckon he'd like to have a squint at Betty."

"Who is Betty?" Master Rupert asked of Sadie.

"She's Joey's calf ; he's going to send her to the Topsham fair, and she is a beauty. Don't you want to see her ?"

"I've had riding enough in that cart to satisfy me for one day, and I think I will go into the house. Your brother can drive her down here for me to look at, after we've had lunch."

"Go on, Joey !" Deacon Crawford said so sharply that his son looked at him in surprise, and just then Simon decided he would move stableward, therefore there was no further opportunity for conversation.

Joey not only cared for Simon, but he paid a visit to Betty, and was standing in the stall with the calf when Sadie entered the stable.

"Mother told me to come out and see where you were," she said. "What are you doing here ?"

"Just watchin' Betty, that's all."

"But why don't you come back to the house ?"

Rupert is your company, you know, and mother expects you'll be sociable with him."

"If he don't want to see me any more'n I do him, it'll be a favor for me to stay where I am. Say, do you s'pose he thinks I'm goin' to drive the stock on this farm 'round to the front door for him to look at?"

"Now, Joey, you mustn't be angry because he didn't want to come out here to see Betty. I suppose he's tired, after having been in the cars so long on a hot day, and, besides, he never was on a farm before, so doesn't understand that we can't take cattle into the front yard."

"Look here, Sarah Crawford, I want to know if you think that fellow is somethin' so awful nice?" and Joey spoke sharply.

"But you know he is our cousin, Joey," Sadie replied as if at a loss for words. "We must be sociable with him, else he'll get lonesome. Suppose we were at his home—we'd expect him to do what he could to give us a good time."

Joey had not looked at the matter in exactly that light before, and now he felt considerably ashamed of himself, therefore seemed to believe an excuse was necessary.

"I'm willin' to give him jest as good a time as

I know how, an' would be whether he was my cousin or not ; but what makes him act as if we wasn't fine enough to be 'round where he is ?”

“Now, Joey Crawford, you've got no right to say anything like that ! You haven't much more than looked at him, and can't really say how he acts.”

“It wouldn't have hurt him a little bit if he'd given father an' me a lift with his mother's trunks,” Joey said as a parting shot, and added as he closed Betty's stall in such a manner that there would be no danger any stray pigs could get in, “I'll go back to the house, of course, an' I'll do what I can to give him a good time ; but if he wants to stay in the parlor all the time I shan't get much chance to show him 'round.”

To this Sadie made no reply, and in silence the two walked down the lane until they were where it was possible to see the stone step leading to the kitchen.

“It don't look as if father was doin' very much towards bein' sociable,” Joey said, “else he wouldn't be sittin' out there.”

“I guess he's only gettin' rested after carryin' the trunks up-stairs,” Sadie replied, and then, nestling down by her father's knee, she asked in a whisper, “Why don't you stay in the parlor with the company ?”

“Maryann an’ her boy Rupert have gone upstairs to lay down a spell,” the deacon said with a curious twinkle in his eyes. “They had to wait down at the depot most ten minutes for me, an’ it has tired ’em dreadfully. Your mother is gettin’ dinner, an’ I’m tryin’ to figger out whether I’ll hang ’round the house dressed up ’cause your aunt is here, or get into my other clothes an’ tackle them onions.”

“What does mother want you to do?” Sadie asked in a whisper.

“She’s got the idee that I ought’er set ’round like a graven image, lookin’ jest as I feel with this ’ere stiff collar on—terribly uncomfortable.”

Sadie wisely concluded that she would not give an opinion on the subject, and hurried in to help her mother, while Joey sat down by the side of his father.

“Well, son?” the deacon said inquiringly.

“I don’t know where the pigs are that scared Betty, an’ mother didn’t want me to hunt for ’em while you were at the depot, for fear I wouldn’t have time to fix myself up in style.”

“It does seem as if both of us were dressed a leetle too much for farmers, now don’t it?” and again the odd twinkle came into the deacon’s eyes. “What’s your idee we ought’er do?”

“Find the pigs, or make certain they ain’t on the farm, an’ then weed the onions,” Joey replied promptly.

“It wouldn’t do for both of us to go off an’ leave the city folks. Of course you must do what you can for Rupert, so after dinner I’ll hunt pigs, an’ you stay ’round the house lookin’ the best you know how.”

“Sadie can do that, an’ I’ll help you, for—”

Joey did not finish the remark, for at that moment loud screams were heard from the rear of the house, and as the deacon and his son sprang to their feet it was possible to distinguish the words :

“The miserable pigs ! Is this farm to be ruined by such brutes ? Now what shall I do ? What *shall* I do ?”

It was Aunt Jane who had spoken, and the deacon cried as he ran swiftly in the direction from which the voice had come :

“What *is* the matter, mother ? You seem to be terribly distressed.”

“Distressed ?” Aunt Jane repeated as the deacon and Joey came in view of the well-house. “Of course I’m distressed, an’ who could help it with a lot of pigs runnin’ ’round loose seekin’ what they may devour ?”

“But what have they done, mother?” the deacon asked in perplexity, and his wife replied in a tone of despair :

“What haven’t they done this day? Now they’ve gone an’ eaten the custards I set out here to cool, an’ your sister will think I’m a terribly shiftless housekeeper not to have pie for dinner. Either those pigs have got to leave this farm, or I shall !”

“I wanted to hunt ’em out ; but you thought I ought’er keep dressed up,” Joey said quickly, believing that now was come the time when he might escape from the task of entertaining the cousin who seemingly did not care to be entertained. “It won’t take me a great while to get rid of ’em, if you say the word.”

“Well I do say it !” his mother cried emphatically. “It’s no use for me to make any attempt at gettin’ along if those wretched creatures are allowed to prowl around the farm.”

Joey had never moved more quickly than now, when he had his mother’s permission to take off the garments which, because of their glaring newness and “Sunday” appearance, caused him to feel uncomfortable.

Aunt Jane had not ceased to mourn loudly over the loss of the pies, when Joey came out of the

house looking quite like his old self, and feeling as if he really belonged on the farm once more.

“If you find ’em, son, put the pesky things in the south pasture, for the drovers will soon be back lookin’ after their property, an’ it would be heathen-like for us to turn the pigs loose so’s to give the men a long hunt,” Deacon Crawford said, and his wife added :

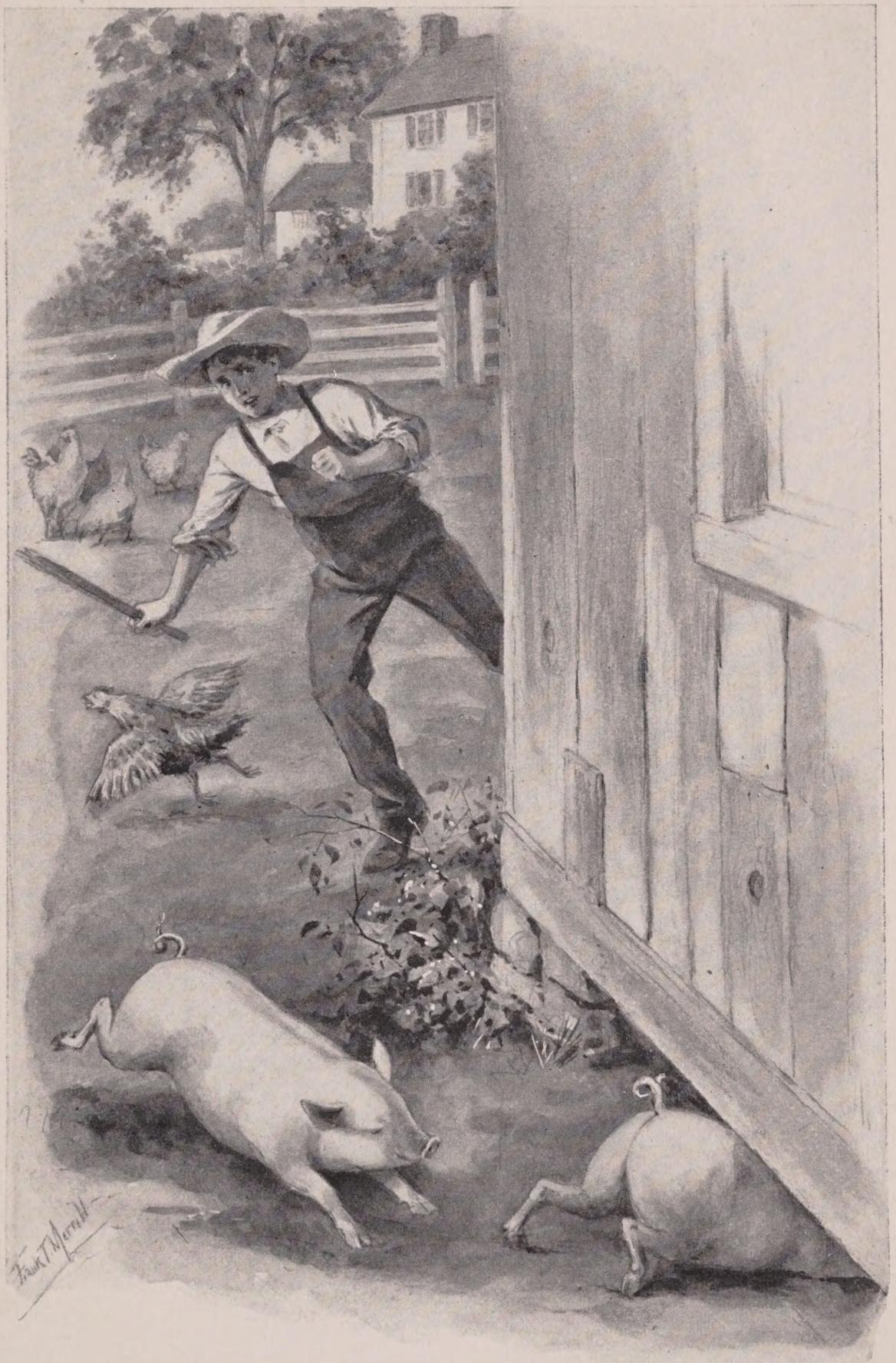
“The least you can ask is that whoever owns the brutes will pay for the damage they’ve done on this farm !”

“Now, now, mother, it’s provokin’, I know ; but we won’t show ourselves so close-fisted as to ask pay for three pies, although I ain’t sayin’ but it cost you considerable work to make ’em.”

“What about the double-seated wagon that was broken to pieces through them ?” Aunt Jane asked, now beginning to lose her temper.

“It was so old that any kind of a hard knock would have tumbled it to pieces, an’ I couldn’t truthfully say it’s much worse now than when we hauled it out of the shed. That was the first wagon I ever owned, an’ it had been used five years before I bought it.”

Joey did not wait to hear the remainder of the conversation ; but ran off at full speed as if fearing his mother might change her mind about let-



JOEY CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF TWO AS THEY RAN UNDER THE BUILDING.

ting him wear his old clothes on this first day of his aunt's arrival.

If he had believed it would be a simple matter to find the pigs, he soon learned that he had been mistaken, for, hunt as he might in the vicinity of the house, he could not even see the tail of one, and it was not until the tool-shed had been visited that the mischief-makers showed themselves.

Then Joey caught a glimpse of two as they ran under the building, and the prospect of soon ridding the farm of their presence was not promising. It was impossible to crawl very far underneath the flooring; but, lying flat on his stomach, with head and shoulders hidden by the timbers, he poked at them with a long stick as he yelled savagely. The pigs paid no other attention to his efforts than to retreat yet further into their snug refuge, and the boy, perspiring profusely, his eyes and throat filled with dust, was rapidly losing his patience when he heard a languid voice ask :

“Have you any idea what you are trying to do, Cousin Joseph?”

“It's that Roop!” Joey whispered to himself, and he felt obliged to count twenty before speaking, lest he make an angry reply. Then he said as mildly as was possible under the circumstances :

“I know what I want to do ; but ain’t very certain how it should be done.”

Then Joey poked at the pigs yet more vigorously, but without other effect than to stir up the dust until he was nearly choked.

“ Why don’t you keep your pigs where it won’t be such hard work to get at them ? I thought farmers always had a pen for those kind of animals.”

“ I wish I had that Roop under here two or three minutes ; he wouldn’t try to be so funny,” Joey said to himself, and then replied to his cousin : “ These things don’t belong to father ; they’re part of a drove that ran in here just before you came, an’ I’m tryin’ to get ’em off the farm.”

“ Why don’t you let the people who own them attend to that work ? ” Rupert asked in a tone of innocence ; but Joey felt firmly convinced that the “ city boy ” was making sport of him. “ I wouldn’t crawl into a small place like that on such a hot day, hunting for other men’s property.”

“ Perhaps you wouldn’t, because you don’t have to ; but I’m here to do such jobs.”

Then it was that Sadie came up, and, not understanding exactly the situation of affairs, asked :

“Are the pigs under there, Joey?”

“S’posen they wasn’t, do you think I’d be foolin’ ’round here?” and even a stranger might have understood that Joey’s stock of patience was well-nigh exhausted.

“Why not let them stay until the people come for them?” Sadie continued. “It would be easier to fasten them under there, than try to drive such obstinate things out.”

Joey understood at once that his sister had suggested the most simple way out of the difficulty, and immediately all traces of vexation left him, as he said cheerily :

“I declare for it, Sadie, if you haven’t got a lot more common sense than I ever dreamed of! It won’t be a great job to fix things so those pigs will have to stay here till they’re sorry for ever havin’ come in to such a place!”

Then Joey attempted to back out from his uncomfortable position, and to his dismay found that it was impossible. He had burrowed beneath the timbers only after great effort, and now, work as he might, was unable to extricate himself.

If he and Sadie had been alone, he would have thought it a great joke, and called upon her to pull him out; but with Rupert standing there,

ready to make sport, as Joey believed, it was most humiliating.

“Come out,” Sadie said after waiting a moment, without understanding that her brother was doing his best to free himself. “Dinner will be ready very soon, and you’ll need to be cleaned up a good bit before you’ll look decent to come to the table.”

“It must be hot under there, Joseph,” Rupert said, apparently with kindly intent; but Joey was positive his cousin spoke jeeringly.

Then it was that the deacon’s voice could be heard, as he called cheerily :

“Come to dinner, children; we’re waitin’ for you. Never mind the pigs, Joey, I’ll lend you a hand at routin’ ’em out after we’ve had somethin’ to eat!”

“Why don’t you come, Joey?” Sadie asked anxiously. “Mother will scold if we keep her waiting.”

Joey wriggled frantically; but it was as if the harder he struggled the more firmly was he held by the timbers, yet he remained silent until his father called the second time, when Sadie replied :

“We’re coming as soon as Joey gets out from under the tool-shed.”

“What’s he doin’ there?” Deacon Crawford asked curiously.

“He’s looking for the pigs.”

“Tell him to let ’em go for a while ; your mother won’t put any more pies in the well-house, an’ if Betty is shut in the stable, they can’t do any great harm.”

Joey understood that it was no longer possible to keep his cousin in ignorance of the situation, and he said in a low tone, having no little difficulty in speaking because of the dust in his throat :

“I’m stuck fast here, Sarah Crawford, an’ that’s all there is to it. You’ll have to ask father to come an’ pull me out!”

Rupert appeared to think this a great joke, for he laughed heartily as he ran toward the house, and Joey dug his fingers into the dirt to prevent angry words from escaping his lips.

CHAPTER IV.

RUPERT ASSISTS.

THE possibility that Joey might be in serious trouble frightened Sadie, and she ran at full speed toward the house, calling for her father at the full strength of her lungs, therefore the deacon and his wife, as well as their guest, were thoroughly alarmed before being able to understand the situation of affairs.

“Joey got part way under the tool-shed, and says he can’t get back !” Sadie cried as she came within view of the kitchen window, and Aunt Jane, who had been waiting impatiently for the children to obey the summons to dinner, said sharply, without realizing the full meaning of the child’s words :

“Tell him to come straight in to dinner. We’ve had trouble enough this forenoon without his makin’ more by hangin’ back till everything gets cold, an’ he knows as well as I do, that your father is so set he won’t ask the blessin’ till every last one of you is at the table.”

“But he’s stuck under the tool-shed, and wants father to pull him out,” Sadie said tearfully, and then it was that the deacon understood what had happened; but it seemed to him so comical that he was forced to indulge in noisy mirth before it was possible to go to the assistance of his son.

Rupert seemed to enjoy the situation even more than the deacon, and, much to Sadie’s annoyance, he described with a reckless disregard of the truth, Joey’s efforts to release himself from imprisonment.

The only thing which Aunt Jane thoroughly understood in regard to the whole matter was that dinner was already on the table, and it seemed to her in the highest degree necessary the food be eaten at once lest its delicacy be impaired, therefore she insisted that the deacon make all haste to release Joey.

In order to prevent Rupert from being a witness of the scene when Joey was dragged out by the heels, Sadie proposed that he go with her to see the wreck of the wagon; but the city cousin plainly declared he would rather lose his dinner than miss seeing his uncle release the prisoner.

“It’ll be the only fun I’ve had since we came to this stupid place,” he said with more of animation than he had shown since his arrival, and as

he ran away his mother explained that "dear little Rupert was terribly disappointed because his father would not listen to their going to the sea-shore where he could meet his city friends."

"What seems to be the matter, son?" Deacon Crawford asked in a voice half-stifled by mirth, as he approached the tool-shed, and Joey said curtly :

"I should think you might see that I'm stuck here!"

"It does look a leetle that way, son. Did you find the pigs?"

"They're under here too, an' I only wish I could get one good whack at 'em! Did you come alone, father?"

"Your cousin Rupert is here," the deacon replied in a mirthful tone, and he laughed outright when what sounded like a moan came from beneath the building.

"I said I'd rather go without dinner, than miss the chance of seeing Uncle Jonas pull you out," Rupert cried, and the words were hardly more than spoken when the deacon had extricated his son from the uncomfortable position.

"Well, you've seen the whole thing, an' now there's no reason why you shouldn't go back with

father," Joey said sharply, as he turned in the direction of the stable.

"Where are you goin' now, son? Your mother's waitin' dinner for you," the deacon said as if in surprise.

"Tell her I won't come into the house for quite a spell; I've got some work to do now."

The deacon seemed to understand that his son did not care to show himself until after having made some change in his personal appearance, and turned toward the house, literally forcing Rupert to follow him, as he took the lad playfully by the arm, and said cheerily :

"There's a good deal about farm work that you haven't got the hang of yet; but Joey was brought up to it, so I allow he knows pretty near as much as I do."

"I guess if he hadn't got stuck under that shed, the work could have waited till he had his dinner," Rupert said shrewdly, and he made no further effort to see his cousin.

Nearly an hour later Sadie opened the door of the stable, as she whispered hoarsely :

"Where are you, Joey? I'm all alone; Rupert has gone up stairs to lie down again, and father's in the parlor with Aunt Marie."

Certain faint sounds told that some one was un-

bolting the door leading to that portion of the stable where was Betty's stall, and then Sadie saw Joey's face as he peered cautiously out.

"I'm alone, and you needn't be afraid of seeing any one. Mother has put your dinner in the oven, and she wants you to come and get it. What have you been doing?"

"Just fussin' 'round with Betty. She needs water, but I didn't lead her out for fear that Roop, who thinks he's so funny, might have somethin' to say."

"I'll get the water while you're washing your face and hands. Wait in the kitchen till I come there," and Sadie took up the bucket which stood near at hand, running swiftly down to the well-house.

Not until he had carefully reconnoitred the premises, did Joey venture out, and then he made a long detour in order to gain the kitchen without exposing himself to the view of any one in the front portion of the house.

"There's no reason for you to be ashamed of gettin' caught underneath the tool-shed, Joey," his mother said as he entered, and while she was placing on the table his share of the dinner. "It was an accident that might have happened to any one."

“I wouldn’t have cared if that Roop hadn’t thought it was so awfully funny, an’ tried to make game of me. I wonder how long he’s goin’ to stay?”

“Your aunt told me that they didn’t count on stoppin’ more’n three weeks, an’ even if he don’t seem very agreeable, you ought to be able to put up with him that length of time, for he’s your father’s only sister’s only boy,” Aunt Jane said soothingly, for now that the responsibility of serving dinner had been taken from her, she was full of sympathy for Joey.

“If all city fellows act so foolish, I don’t want to see many of ’em ’round here. What makes him go to bed so often?”

“Your Aunt Marie thinks boys of his age need a great deal of rest, an’ I s’pose she’s got him in the habit, though I must say I think it’s a terribly shiftless way of spendin’ the time. Where are the pigs?”

“Under the tool-shed, an’ I reckon we’d better fasten ’em in there till their owners come. I’ll see to it as soon as I’ve finished my share of this chicken,” Joey said, speaking indistinctly owing to the fullness of his mouth. “You’re a great cook, mother; father says your equal ain’t to be found in this county, an’ when we have

company to dinner I always count on eatin' a good deal."

Aunt Jane actually blushed under such praise ; but before she could reply Sadie came into the kitchen, as she said :

"I watered Betty, and fastened the door so that she won't be disturbed in case those pigs start out on more mischief. Now, Joey, mother and I both think you ought to show Rupert over the farm ; he may be a real nice kind of a boy after you get acquainted with him."

"Yes, son," Aunt Jane added, "it won't do to let him see that you feel badly over bein' caught under the tool-shed, else he'll have good reason for makin' fun."

Because of such advice, and very much more which was given before Joey had finished dinner, Rupert received quite a surprise when he lounged languidly into the kitchen while his cousin was yet at the table.

"Did your father pull you out?" he asked, thinking, perhaps, that Joey would show signs of being vexed ; but the country boy replied with a laugh :

"Indeed he did ; but I got two or three good bumps on my head before the job was finished."

Rupert was evidently disappointed, and instead

of continuing the conversation, he wiped carefully with his handkerchief one end of the broad stone step, and seated himself gingerly, as if afraid of disarranging his clothing.

“Wouldn’t you like to see the farm?” Joey asked after he and Sadie had exchanged glances of mirth, provoked by Rupert’s excessive care of his garments.

“I don’t want to walk around in the hot sun, if that’s what you mean,” the lad replied curtly. “When it is cooler I may look through the stables. Say, haven’t you got any better horses than the one your father drove up from the station?”

“That was old Simon,” Joey said good naturedly, for he had just promised himself that he would not allow his cousin to vex him again by seeming to cast discredit on Hillside farm. “We use him for plowin’, mostly; but I guess he’s about as good as we’ve got. Father don’t go in for raisin’ fancy horses; but his cattle can’t be beaten in this county.”

“How many have you got?”

“Thirty-one head, countin’ in my Betty.”

“That’s the one you are going to send to the fair, I suppose.”

“Yes, an’ I’ve just begun to get her in shape, for it opens in two weeks.”

“Then we shall be here.” Rupert replied thoughtfully.

“An’ you’ll have lots of fun. Father has promised that we shall all go while it lasts—three whole days, an’ of course he’ll take you an’ Aunt Marie.”

“I guess one day at a country show will be enough for mother and me. We both wanted to go to the sea-shore, where the most of our friends in the city are; but father said we must come here, and I’m sure I don’t know how we’ll kill the time.”

“I should think it would be kind of lonesome work wishin’ the time away. Out here we have so much to do that it don’t seem as if the days were half long enough. I must go an’ pen the pigs up, so they can’t cut any more capers ’round here; don’t you want to come with me?”

“It’s too warm,” Rupert replied with a yawn. “I may go out to the stable after a while.”

Joey looked at his mother as if to ask her whether he had done his duty as host, and she replied by saying as she glanced meaningly at Sadie:

“You mustn’t insist on your cousin’s goin’ with you if he wants to stay where it is cool. Sarah

will be here, if he changes his mind, so you may as well go about your chores the same as ever."

Nothing could have pleased Joey better than this permission, and he lost no further time in setting about the task of preventing the pigs from doing further mischief.

Rupert remained silent as Sadie seated herself beside him, and when ten minutes or more passed without his showing any signs of animation, she went into the house to get her knitting, for the members of Deacon Crawford's household were not accustomed to remaining idle during their waking hours, save for the short time on the stone door-step after the work of the day had come to an end.

Sadie was not absent more than five minutes, but when she returned Rupert was not to be seen, and, concluding he had gone up-stairs for another resting-spell, she settled down to her work with a sigh of relief because it would not be necessary for her to play the part of hostess.

Out by the tool-house Joey was working industriously. He had spent considerable time hunting for lumber with which to board up the lower portion of the building, and had but just begun on the real task when, to his surprise,

Rupert sauntered up looking exceedingly cool and particularly well dressed.

“Hello, changed your mind 'bout comin' out, eh?” Joey asked cheerily.

“I thought it would be as well to go out to the stable, and have that over with. Haven't you any better harness than what I saw hanging up there?”

“All father owns is in the room off the mow-floor. We put the best set on Simon this mornin', because he broke the common one. Didn't that strike you as bein' pretty good? It cost sixteen dollars.”

“Is that all?” Rupert cried as if in surprise. “Why, my father pays as much as a hundred for every set he buys, and the ornaments on them are solid silver.”

“Yes, I s'pose you city folks do have some great turn-outs; but they wouldn't be of much account on a farm,” Joey said good-naturedly, as he turned his attention once more to the work on hand, and Rupert watched him critically for some time. Then he asked :

“Where are all the cattle you said your father owned?”

“The cows are in the pasture, an' the oxen are workin' over on the other side of the road. We

don't keep cattle in the barn while there's enough for them to eat out of doors."

"That's what I thought," and Rupert spoke as if there might have been a question in his mind regarding such a custom. "When the other cattle were let out this mornin', somebody left a cow shut up by herself."

"That's my calf, Betty—the one I'm going to take to the fair."

"Is that the one? Why she is nothing but a common cow!"

"She ain't even that yet a while," Joey cried with a laugh; "but I believe she's the best yearlin' to be found in this county, an' if she isn't, I shan't bring home the blue ribbon I'm countin' on."

"If it's only cheap looking cows like the one I saw in the stable, that are shown at country fairs, I don't believe I'd care to waste my time going to see them," and Rupert struck lightly with his handkerchief at a speck of dust on his boots.

"That'll be all right," Joey replied with a laugh, for he was beginning to understand that it gave his cousin pleasure to have him show signs of vexation. "If you don't care for cattle or vegetables, a county fair ain't a very lively place for you city boys, unless you like to see horse-racin'. Goin' back to the house?"

“Yes, I’ve seen all of the farm I want to,” Rupert said as he went slowly down the lane, and then he halted to say, as if it was nothing of particular consequence, “I thought that cow ought to be out of doors, if you wanted any milk to-night, so I left the stable open.”

“Did you let Betty loose?” Joey cried excitedly, as he dropped the hammer and nails.

“I left it so she could go out, and you had better see to it that she isn’t shut up alone there again.”

“And she can get into the road!” Joey cried tearfully, as he ran at full speed toward the stable. “If that—if he has turned her loose I may as well give up all hope of winnin’ the blue ribbon, for she’ll race her legs off before I can catch her!”

Rupert half-turned to watch his cousin a moment, and then resumed his leisurely walk toward the house, looking particularly well pleased with himself.

“Why, where did you come from?” Sadie asked in surprise. “When I came back with my knitting you had disappeared, and I made certain you’d gone up-stairs to have another nap.”

“I thought I might as well finish up the stable this afternoon; but there wasn’t anything worth

seeing. I found a cow there alone, and opened the door so she could get out ; but your brother doesn't seem to be pleased with what I did."

"You let Betty out of the stable?" Sadie cried, the knitting falling from her hands as she looked at her cousin in dismay.

"Yes, and I am certain she needed the fresh air, although I suppose you people who have always lived here, think it is just as well to keep cows in a place like that when the weather is so hot," Rupert said with a yawn, and then he lounged leisurely toward the front door.

Sadie gave no heed to the fact that the needles had slipped out of the stitches, but ran swiftly through the house to the parlor, where her father sat engaged in what was evidently a private conversation with his sister, and, without thought of being rude, cried shrilly :

"Rupert has turned Betty out, and the gates to the road all open !"

Deacon Crawford sprang up from his chair in hardly less excitement than that displayed by his daughter, as he asked hurriedly :

"Does Joey know about it ?"

"I didn't ask Rupert ; but he is somewhere in the house, and I'll find out."

"I'll harness Simon, or one of the other horses,

an' while I'm doin' that, find out which way Joey has gone! It won't do that heifer any good to roam 'round till mornin'."

As the deacon left the room hurriedly Aunt Jane came in, and, of course, insisted on knowing what had happened. Before Sadie could reply Rupert entered the front door, and said carelessly :

"I saw the poor thing there alone, and thought it would be a good idea to let her go with the other cows, wherever they are."

"But that is the yearlin' Joey was goin' to send to the fair!" Aunt Jane said sharply.

"Yes, so he told me; but it seems foolish to expect that such a cheap looking animal will win a prize," and having thus given his opinion, Rupert went up-stairs, leaving Aunt Jane struggling to repress the anger which was nearly overpowering her.

By this time Sadie began to realize that possibly she might be of some assistance in catching Betty, in case the calf had taken advantage of the open door, and she ran into the road.

Far away in the distance, stationward, she could see Joey; but nothing in the form of a cow, and she went to the stable, where her father was harnessing Simon.

“I reckon he saw her tracks in the dust,” the deacon said when Sadie told him of what she had seen. “There’s likely been more than one cow in the road since mornin’, an’ I’m thinkin’ you’d best go up towards the Harkins’ farm, while I overtake Joey, if so be Simon is willin’ to spunk up a little.”

Sadie started off, walking very rapidly, while Aunt Jane stood at the gate looking up and down the road, as if believing Betty might suddenly appear.

Rupert was most likely resting from the fatigues of the day, and his mother did not venture out into the sunlight.

Half an hour passed, and Aunt Jane had seen nothing of her family or the heifer. Thirty minutes more, and then the deacon appeared, walking as if weary.

“Where is Simon?” Aunt Jane asked timidly, for since the aged horse had indulged in such antics as those displayed during the forenoon, her old-time confidence in him was destroyed.

“I left him with Joey; it looks as if Betty had taken it into her head to see the country, an’ the boy will have a long chase. Where is Sadie?”

“She hasn’t come back yet, an’ I guess she must have kept on to the Wilkins’ place, hopin’

the calf may have gone there. Tell me, Jonas," Aunt Jane added in a whisper as she glanced over her shoulder to make certain that Mrs. Stockbridge was not within hearing, "what have you an' your sister been talkin' 'bout all the afternoon?"

"Well, Jane, it's a sad story," and Deacon Crawford spoke in a low tone as he also glanced toward the house to make sure there were no listeners. "John Stockbridge has lost all his money, an' a leetle more, I reckon. Maryann has been tellin' me about it, an' although she hasn't come right down to business yet, I've got sense enough to understand that he's sent her here to see if I can't help 'em a bit."

CHAPTER V.

A LONG RIDE.

WITHIN two hours from the time of her setting out, Sadie returned unsuccessful. She had walked up the road a mile or more beyond the Wilkins farm; but could learn nothing regarding Betty, therefore it seemed positive she had gone in the direction of Topsham, "in order to be there when the fair opened," Rupert suggested as a joke, at which no one laughed, for the members of the family were seriously concerned regarding the possible whereabouts of the calf.

"Joey has kept her in such good condition that she can travel faster an' farther than Simon, an' I reckon she feels just in the right mood for caperin'," the deacon said in reply to Sadie's question as to whether Betty was likely to stray far away.

"Of course Joey will come back when he finds he can't catch her before dark," Aunt Jane said as if talking to herself, and the deacon replied grimly:

“If I know the boy, an’ I ought’er be right well acquainted with him by this time, he’ll keep on till he finds her, without payin’ any attention to the sun. He’ll get along all right, mother, so you needn’t worry if he don’t show himself before sunrise to-morrow.”

Then the deacon went about his farm duties, after saying a few words privately to his sister, and Rupert, who at last was beginning to understand that he had done serious mischief, remained with Sadie as she stood at the gate in the hope of seeing Joey return with the frolicsome Betty.

When supper-time came Joey was yet absent, and, later, the deacon deferred reading the evening lesson a full hour, for never before had the boy been away from home when the family were gathered for prayers.

Sadie would have been pleased to continue her watch for Joey without regard to the lateness of the hour; but her mother insisted that she go to bed shortly after Mrs. Stockbridge and Rupert went to their chambers, and there she remained awake until what seemed a very long while after midnight, when she heard her brother’s voice in the yard.

Creeping softly out of bed to the window, she saw that Joey had indeed found Betty, for there

she was, tied to the rear end of the wagon in such a manner that, object as she might, there was nothing to be done save march homeward at such a pace as Simon should set.

Then Sadie, a great burden removed from her mind, went back to bed and straightway fell asleep, not to awaken until her mother called next morning from the kitchen.

Joey, in his anxiety regarding Betty, had given no heed to his own fatigue, so eager was he to learn if the calf had suffered in any way because of her long jaunt, had already gone to the stable, and from her mother Sadie heard all that could be told concerning the search for the runaway.

Not until he had driven seven miles or more did Joey find his pet, and then it was necessary to spend considerable time catching her, after which he forced Simon, who was by no means averse to such a pace, to walk slowly all the way home.

“Do you suppose she has hurt herself in any way?” Sadie asked anxiously, and her mother replied :

“Your father says it isn’t likely. Of course it has done her no good to run away ; but she’ll be as frisky as ever when she gets over bein’ tired. You’re to rid up the dinin’-room while I look after

the biscuits, for it won't do to slight our work on account of a calf. I expect your Aunt Marie thinks we're terribly foolish because we got so worked up over it."

"What right had Rupert to turn Betty loose?" Sadie cried indignantly. "He must have known that she was shut in for some good reason, instead of having been forgotten, as he claims to believe!"

"There, there, we won't speak of the matter again. It's over an' done with, an' we wouldn't be any better off to think the child deliberately intended to do mischief," and Aunt Jane set about making biscuit with the air of one who is determined not to be vexed, however great the provocation.

When Joey came into the house, shortly before breakfast was served, he reported that Betty was looking as well as could be expected, and, what seemed to give him almost as much pleasure, his father had decided that he had better attend to his regular work on the farm, leaving to Sadie the duty of entertaining Rupert.

Thus it was that during this day Joey saw his cousin only at meal-time. Sadie reported that Rupert had remained in his own room, except at such rare intervals as he strolled down the road to the grove through which ran the brook, and

then he had said there was no reason why she should go with him.

The owners of the pigs had come and taken them away, to the great relief of Aunt Jane, and, save for the fact that Deacon Crawford spent the evening in the parlor talking privately with Mrs. Stockbridge, matters at Hillside farm seemed, on this night, to be very much the same as before the visitors arrived.

During the four days which followed, Joey saw very little of his cousin ; but, as a matter of course, he learned through Sadie how Rupert had spent the time. It really seemed as if the boy had been trying to make himself agreeable.

It was the evening of the fifth day after the arrival of the guests ; the necessary work of the farm had required so much of the deacon's time that he could not spend the customary half-hour with his family, but came in from the barn only when Aunt Jane and the children were making ready to retire.

“ Did your sister tell you that John Stockbridge was comin' here to-morrow ? ” Aunt Jane asked.

“ No ; but I had an idee that it wouldn't be a great while before he felt called on to pay us a visit.”

“ Why ? ”

“Well, I told Maryann that in justice to you an’ the children I couldn’t lend John the money all of us had earned by hard work, an’ it kind’er got into my head that one such answer wouldn’t do for her. So he’s comin’ to-morrow, eh?”

“Of course you’ll go to the depot to meet him?”

“I sure will; John Stockbridge is a decent kind of a man, an’ if his family hadn’t spent quite so much, I’m thinkin’ he wouldn’t be runnin’ ’round the country tryin’ to scrape up money enough to keep him from goin’ to smash. I reckon we’ll have quite a bit of business on hand after he gets here, an’ it won’t be a bad idee if the children ain’t around.”

“But what can you do with ’em, father?” and Aunt Jane looked more distressed than Sadie had ever seen her since the flock of half-grown turkeys disappeared so mysteriously.

“Joey, have you done anything about enterin’ Betty for the fair?” the deacon asked abruptly.

“No, sir; I thought you’d fix that when you entered the oxen.”

“That’s what I counted on; but somehow there hasn’t been any time. We can’t put it off any longer, so you’d better drive down to Topsham to-morrow. You’ll have to make arrangements

for sheds in which to show the cattle an' Betty. Take Simon with the baggage wagon; Sadie will be glad to go with you, an' you may as well give Rupert a chance. He has hung 'round the house so close since he got here that a change will freshen him up, I reckon."

As a matter of course, after hearing the conversation between their parents, the children understood that the excursion to Topsham had been thus suddenly planned in order that they might be absent when their Uncle John arrived, although it really was necessary to make arrangements for exhibiting the cattle; but they were none the less delighted, for it was a rare treat indeed to drive to town alone.

Joey was so excited with the idea of taking the first step toward showing Betty at the fair, that he was up and dressed next morning before any other member of the family had awakened, and old Simon must have been surprised at receiving such a generous allowance of grain at so early an hour.

When, after breakfast had been served, Rupert came into the dining-room, Sadie, already dressed in her best frock, eagerly announced the program of the day, and much to her surprise the lad gave no token of being pleased.

“What kind of a carriage are you to go in?” he asked.

“Since Simon broke the double-seated wagon, there is nothing except the one you came from the depot in,” Sadie replied with a merry laugh.

“I saw a new one in the carriage shed,” Master Rupert said sharply.

“That has only a single seat, an’ there will be three of us,” Joey replied, as if such fact settled the matter beyond controversy.

“I had rather ride three on a seat, than go in that old cart,” and Rupert spoke in a fretful tone. “If you use the carriage, I’ll go with you; otherwise I shall stay here.”

“But that is father’s very best wagon,” Joey began, and before he could say anything more the deacon interrupted him :

“I shall use that when I drive to the depot after your Uncle John.”

“Then I won’t go,” Rupert replied with not a little show of temper, and he positively refused to listen when his mother tried to explain that it would be more pleasant for him to accompany his cousins, because his father had come on business which would occupy his time during the day to the exclusion of everything else.

Master Rupert seemed determined to remain at

home as he had threatened, and when the meal was at an end Deacon Crawford said to Joey :

“You’d better harness Simon at once, son, for it will be pleasanter ridin’ in the early mornin’. Take plenty of time to do all your business, an’ don’t forget a feed of corn for the horse.”

Sadie and her mother had no more than finished making ready the luncheon which was to take the place of dinner, when Joey and Simon came to the door, and, to the surprise of both the children, Rupert made his appearance as if intending to accompany them.

“Hello!” Joey said cheerily. “I thought you’d made up your mind to stay at home, an’ so didn’t put in another seat.”

Rupert made no reply ; but clambered into the wagon as if under protest, and Joey ran back to the shed for a second seat. Sadie got in by the side of her cousin ; Aunt Jane put the basket containing the eatables where she thought there would be the least danger of its being jolted out, and the deacon occupied himself with writing a list of the errands which Joey was to do in order to finish the business of making ready for Betty’s entrance to the fair.

Finally everything was ready for the start, and while Joey and Sadie, their faces literally radiant

with delight, bade their parents and aunt adieu, Rupert turned his head away in sulky silence, causing the deacon to whisper to his wife when the travelers were lost to view in the distance :

“ Maryann made the boy go, an’ he’s so peevish about it that I’m afraid our chickens won’t enjoy themselves as much as they ought’er.”

“ It’ll take more’n one sulky boy to spoil Sarah’s good time, an’ Joey ain’t thinkin’ of anything but enterin’ Betty at the fair,” Aunt Jane replied as she went to her work in the kitchen.

Her mother made no mistake when she believed there was nothing which could prevent Sadie from enjoying herself on that day—certainly nothing in the shape of a sulky boy was enough to mar the pleasure of that ride in the early morning, when the dew had adorned even the blades of grass with tremulous diamonds.

To Joey as well as Sadie, the birds had never sung so sweetly, nor was ever the chip-chip-chip of the squirrels more friendly, and old Simon was allowed to choose his own gait until, when half an hour or more had passed, Rupert said fretfully :

“ It’ll be night before we get there, if you don’t make this miserable old horse move faster! He isn’t traveling two miles an hour.”

“ Oh, yes, he is,” Sadie cried merrily. “ It’s

eight miles to Topsham, and Simon always gets there in less than three hours."

"Three hours!" Rupert cried disdainfully. "Why, my father hasn't got a horse that can't travel that distance in an hour!"

"But he doesn't work 'em in a plow," Joey said in a matter-of-fact tone. "If he did, it wouldn't be a great while before they'd move as slowly as Simon does."

Rupert relapsed into silence once more, much to the satisfaction of his companions. Sadie clambered over on the front seat that she might sit by the side of her brother, and the two saw something of interest at every turn of the road.

Not until they were come within sight of Topsham did Master Rupert speak again, and then it was to ask:

"Is there a good hotel in this town?"

"Folks say it's very nice; but we never were inside," Joey replied. "Mother has given us the biggest kind of a lunch, with a whole custard pie in it, an' I've got Simon's dinner under the seat, so there's no need of our goin' to the hotel."

"That is where I am intending to stop. I didn't want to come in this old wagon, with a horse that isn't much more than a scare-crow; but mother said if I would, she'd let me go to the

hotel and stay there while you were running around in the dust."

"But it'll cost as much as two dollars to stay in the hotel!" Joey cried as if in alarm, and Rupert replied loftily :

"I wouldn't care if it cost twice as much. Mother gave me five dollars to spend, and if there is anything decent to be had in this place, I'm going to have it."

"Five dollars!" Joey cried with a little gasp, much as if he had suddenly been plunged into cold water. "You surely wouldn't spend all that in one day, Rupert?"

"Wouldn't I? Well, you ought to see what I'd done if we had gone to the sea-shore, where a fellow can have something like a good time."

"Then I don't wonder your father wants to—"

Sadie suddenly pressed her hand over Joey's mouth, believing she knew what he was on the point of saying, and the boy was thus reminded that he had no right to speak of what he had heard his parents talking about.

"What is it you don't wonder at?" Rupert asked curiously; but Joey shut his lips tightly, as if afraid the words might escape despite his will.

Rupert repeated his question two or three times,

and finally Joey put an end to it as he said, pointing with the whip to a building a short distance in advance :

“There’s the hotel, an’ perhaps you’d rather not let folks see you drive up in this old wagon. We’ve got to turn down here to come at a place near the market where father always leaves Simon ; but I’ll carry you straight to the door if you say the word.”

“I’ll get out here,” Rupert said quickly, as he clambered down awkwardly because of his efforts to prevent his garments from being soiled by dust on the wheels, and Joey cried cheerily, while coaxing Simon to move on once more :

“We’ll have all our errands done by two o’clock, an’ then drive ’round this way. You can keep watch so’s there won’t be any need of our goin’ to the hotel.”

Rupert marched off without making any reply, and Sadie said with a sigh of relief as the old horse consented to amble down toward the market :

“Now we can have just as good a time as we please! Wouldn’t it be terrible to have our cousin out at Hillside farm all the year round?”

“If he lived there all the time, an’ had to do his share of the work, perhaps he’d get a little

sense into his head. Mother says we mustn't talk harsh 'bout father's only sister's only boy; but what sticks me is, why Aunt Marie ain't more like our own folks? I wonder if Uncle John is just as bad?"

"Don't let's say anything more about them, Joey, else we shall miss part of the good time we might have. I want to make the most of this day!"

From that time until half-past two o'clock there was nothing in the day of pleasure she had planned, which Sadie missed. After Simon had been cared for near the market, with a generous feed of corn on the ground in front of him, the children went to call upon the officers of the County Fair Association, and the necessary arrangements were made for the entry of Betty and the oxen. Then it seemed best to go personally to the fair-grounds in order to select sheds for the use of the cattle, and, afterward, in accordance with his father's instructions, Joey ordered four bales of hay to be sent, on the morning the fair was opened, to the buildings he had chosen.

There were certain articles to be purchased, a list of which Aunt Jane had made, and when all this had been done the two children climbed into

the wagon and ate their dinner, without thought that they were in view of all the passers-by.

“ I reckon Roop is too high-toned to eat things out of a basket, same’s we’re doin’,” Joey said as he toyed with a full half of the custard pie ; “ but I’ll bet he won’t get as good a dinner at the hotel as we’re havin’. Father says there ain’t mother’s equal as a cook in this whole county.”

After the children had eaten all that was possible, there yet remained in the basket enough for another hearty dinner, and Sadie said as she packed the food carefully away that it might be carried home again :

“ Now let’s sit here a while and watch the people go by, it’s so exciting. I’ve been thinking that was what we’d do ever since we started from home.”

It was quite as “ exciting ” to Joey as to his sister, and so engrossed were both that they lost all idea of the flight of time until two gentlemen passed near at hand, when one of them said to his companion :

“ It’s half-past two, and we shall be late at the board meeting.”

“ I declare if I hadn’t forgotten all about goin’ after Roop ! ” Joey exclaimed, as he leaped to the ground and hurriedly began harnessing Simon.

“I told him we’d be on the corner ’bout two o’clock, an’ if he’s been watchin’ for us half an hour, I reckon his temper ain’t any of the best.”

Five minutes later the children and Simon were at the street corner where they parted with Rupert earlier in the day, and Sadie said as Joey reined in the patient steed :

“I don’t see him at any of the windows. Perhaps it is just their dinner-time ; I’ve heard mother say that some people think it is stylish to have dinner in the afternoon.”

“If that’s so, then I expect Aunt Marie has hers in the night, when she’s home,” Joey said laughingly. “I guess the hotel dinner is over by this time, an’ Roop’ll be along after a while ; he’s a good deal like old Simon—don’t like to move very fast.”

Very patiently the children waited until the town clock struck the hour of three, and then Sadie said decisively :

“You *must* go and see where he is, Joey. Mother will be terribly worried if we don’t get home before dark, and we haven’t much more than time, even if we start this very minute.”

Joey leaped out of the wagon and ran toward the hotel, wondering whether his cousin might not feel offended if he showed himself there, yet

realizing that it was no longer a question of ministering to Rupert's whims, but an absolute necessity that they start homeward very soon.

Timidly he entered the building, and hurried from one public room to another, but without seeing anything of his cousin. The hotel was by no means thronged with guests, therefore he had little difficulty in making certain that Rupert was not among them.

"I can't find him anywhere!" Joey cried, running back to where Sadie and Simon were waiting.

"He *must* be there!"

"I couldn't find him."

"Did you ask anybody if they'd seen him?"

"No; I never thought of that."

"Then go straight up to the man who owns the hotel, and ask him what he knows about Rupert," Sadie said in a tone of authority, and Joey hastened to obey what was neither more nor less than a command.

CHAPTER VI.

RUPERT'S WHIM.

JOEY re-entered the hotel shyly ; he believed that none save those who were prepared to spend money, and a good deal of it, were allowed inside, therefore he was an intruder. Under almost any other circumstances he would have refused flatly to make any effort at finding the owner of the establishment ; but it seemed imperative he and Sadie be at home before sunset, and to such end it was necessary Rupert be found as soon as possible.

Fortunately Joey had but little difficulty in finding the landlord ; the first person he accosted was a boy who had been giving a very poor imitation of cleaning a window, and this lad appeared more than willing to cease work in order to give the bashful visitor the information he desired.

“There’s the boss, over there whittlin’. Are you sure he’s the one you want to see ?”

“I think so,” Joey replied timidly. “I’m look-

in' for Roop; he said he'd be here 'bout two o'clock, an' I want to find out where he is."

"Who's Roop?" the lad asked as he ceased all pretence of work, now that he had an excuse for idling.

"He's a cousin of ours, an' was comin' here to dinner."

"I'll bet I know the very fellow you mean! Does he go 'round with his nose stuck up, actin' as if he couldn't find anything good enough for him?"

"That's the very one!" Joey exclaimed, delighted at having found thus readily one who could give him the information he desired. "Where is he?"

"I dunno; he swung 'round a good deal before dinner, an' then I saw him loafin' in the stable. P'rhaps he's there now; we'll go an' see," and the boy started toward the street door, when the man who had been pointed out as the landlord, cried sharply:

"Come back here, Sam, you shiftless apology for a boy. I want you to stick right at cleanin' them windows, an' if you sneak off agin we're likely to have trouble."

"But here's a fellow who's huntin' after his cousin; says he was goin' to be here to dinner,

an' I reckon he means the one who was puttin' on so many airs. He was out in the stable the last—"

"Get to work cleanin' them windows, an' I'll 'tend to runnin' this house, if it's all the same to you. Who 're you lookin' for, sonny?" he added, turning toward Joey, whose courage revived when he saw that the proprietor of the hotel was not the awe-inspiring man he had expected to find.

"I'm huntin' for a cousin of mine who stopped here when we first came into town, sir."

"Are you Deacon Jonas Crawford's boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"An' does your cousin call himself Rupert Stockbridge?"

"That's his name! He said he'd be watchin' for us when we'd finished doin' our errands," and Joey motioned toward the window from which Sadie and old Simon could be seen, as if to identify them as members of his party.

"Say, can your cousin handle a horse all right?" the landlord asked after glancing at Sadie.

"I don't know, sir; but he told me his father owned some fast ones. Do you know where he is?"

“I know he ought'er be back by this time,” the landlord replied almost angrily. “He stopped here to dinner, an' it didn't seem as if we had anything good enough for him, 'cordin' to the way he grumbled. Then he wanted to hire a team ; told me who his father was, an' said he was visitin' Deacon Jonas. He seemed to have plenty of money ; allowed he knew all about horses, an' I let him have a pretty fair turn-out with the agreement that he'd be back before two o'clock. I reckon if anything has happened to my property, his father is able to settle the bills ?”

“Uncle John is a rich man,” Joey began, and then he ceased speaking very suddenly as he remembered what he had heard his parents talking about, and mentally questioned if a very wealthy man would be so eager to borrow money.

The landlord did not, apparently, give any heed to the sudden break in Joey's statement ; but said in a tone of anxiety, as he gazed out of the window :

“If he knows how to handle a horse, everything is all right, an' he has gone further than he counted on ; but I let him have a beast that wouldn't put up with any foolin'. I reckon you're countin' on waitin' for him ?”

“Sadie an'I must be home before dark, an'

Simon can't travel very fast," Joey replied in perplexity. "I don't know what we ought'er do."

"Well, I can't tell you," the landlord said as he resumed his whittling; "but I know that somebody will have to pay me for that 'ere team if anything has gone wrong."

Joey was not thinking of possible accidents just then. The one thought in his mind was that his mother would be alarmed concerning them, if they failed to arrive at Hillside farm before sunset.

While one might have counted twenty he stood irresolutely in front of the whittling landlord, and then, turning suddenly, ran to where Sadie was awaiting him with no slight show of impatience.

"Where's Rupert?" she cried while Joey was yet some distance away. "He must hurry, else we can't get home before dark, and I don't know what mother would say if we wasn't there at supper-time."

"He's gone to ride, an' nobody knows when he'll be back!" Joey cried angrily. "Now what are we to do?"

It was some time before Sadie could understand that their cousin had gone away on a pleasure ex-

curSION of his own, and then she sat staring at Joey in mingled surprise and vexation.

“Why don’t you say something?” her brother asked irritably. “If I ain’t home at feedin’ time, who’ll take care of Betty?”

“But, Joey, we can’t leave him here in Topsham; we’re bound to wait for him!”

“An’ what’ll mother say when it comes night, an’ we ain’t there?”

“I know it, Joey, I know it! How *could* he do such a thing when he has seen how long it takes us to drive eight miles?”

“I say that we ought’er go along, an’ let him get back the best he knows how. Why we *can’t* stay here any longer, Sadie!”

“Why didn’t he stay at home? That’s what he would have done if Aunt Marie hadn’t hired him to come with us, and now he’s spoiled all the good time we’ve had!” Sadie wailed, and Joey cried impatiently:

“It won’t do any good to stand here wishin’. He’s off ridin’ so’s to make folks think he’s terribly high-toned, an’ it ain’t certain he’ll get back before dark! I believe in goin’ home, an’ if Uncle John wants to come after him, there’s nothing to prevent. That’ll be better than lettin’ mother worry her head off.”

“But, Joey, it would never do. Only think of his being here all alone, and how badly Aunt Marie would feel when we got back without him!”

“Then you believe we ought’er wait till he gets good an’ ready to come?”

“There’s nothing else we can do, Joey,” Sadie replied tearfully. “You’ll have to hitch Simon so he can’t run away again, and I’ll stay right here in the wagon. Oh dear, oh dear, what *will* mother think?”

“She’ll think we’re fools to stay ’round till after dark for a stuck-up thing like Roop,” Joey said petulantly, but he set about fastening Simon as his sister had suggested.

When this had been done Joey stood near the wagon irresolutely, gazing down the road in the direction from which he expected his cousin would appear, until Sadie said, as she choked back a little sob :

“Don’t you think it would be a good plan for you to go over to the hotel again? Rupert is so queer that he might stay there instead of coming here, if we didn’t do just what happened to please him.”

“I’ll go,” Joey said emphatically; “but he’d better not make any foolish talk to me, else I’ll

tell him right up an' down that we'll never let him go anywhere with us again."

"You mustn't quarrel, Joey. Remember that he's father's only sister's only boy, an' we're his cousins."

"It's a big pity he didn't go to the sea-shore as he wanted to, instead of comin' to Hillside farm," Master Joey said as he walked slowly toward the hotel, and Sadie cried soothingly :

"Of course it won't be anything so very dreadful for us to drive back in the night. The only trouble is that mother will worry dreadfully ; but we must try to make the best of it."

Joey was too far away to make any reply, and as he neared the hotel, the boy who had been pretending to clean the windows, came out to meet him.

"If that fellow don't show up pretty soon I wouldn't wonder if Colonel Hartley went out to find him, 'cause the rig he hired is worth a good deal of money."

"Who's Colonel Hartley?"

"Why he's the one you were talkin' with ; he's the man who runs the hotel."

"What's he goin' aftèr his team for?"

"He's beginnin' to think that somethin' has happened, else that fellow would have come back.

You see, the horse he hired is pretty high-strung, an' wouldn't stand any foolin' if things went wrong."

"I don't think the owner should have let Roop take such a horse."

"Why, the way that fellow talked you'd thought he'd always lived in a stable; he told about the kind of horses his father owned, and when the team was made ready, he turned up his nose at it. Is that your sister over there?"

"Yes, an' we ought'er been on our way home an hour ago; but she thinks we're bound to wait till Roop comes."

"Why don't you bring her inter the hotel, instead of leavin' her out there in the sun?"

"I reckon she'd rather stay where she is, so's to be ready to start the minute Roop shows up; besides," and now Joey grew confidential, "we haven't got money enough to pay for stayin' at a hotel."

"Colonel Hartley wouldn't charge anything to let her sit in the parlor a spell. He knows your father, so he said, an' by the way I heard him talk after you went out, he'd be willin' to let you run up quite a bill here," and the boy would have led Joey into the hotel, but that he resisted any such friendly efforts.

“I don't run up bills for other folks to pay, an' Sadie had rather stay where she is. I thought I'd kind'er hang 'round here so's to see Roop the minute he got back.”

“All right ; make yourself at home, an' if you want'er know 'bout anything, come to me if the colonel ain't 'tendin' out on business.”

Then the boy walked slowly away as if burdened by a sense of his responsibilities, and Joey stood gazing down the road until the town clock struck the hour of four.

He had never before been away from home in the evening, and a certain feeling of loneliness came over him as he thought of his mother, who by this time was probably expecting to see them drive into the yard.

Then he went over to the wagon, where Sadie was trying to amuse herself by nibbling at the food which had been left from dinner, and stood impatiently near the wheel.

“No, I couldn't eat anything,” he said gloomily as she held the basket toward him. “It just makes me sick to think of our foolin' 'round here when we ought'er to be pretty near home by this time.”

“Rupert *must* come soon, and we'll be home before mother gets to feeling real badly. You

might as well sit here with me, for we can see a carriage when it drives up to the hotel."

Joey clambered on the seat beside his sister, and there the two remained watching eagerly, and talking but little, until the clock struck the hour of five.

At the same moment a market wagon, in which were a man and a boy, was driven into the stable yard of the hotel; but Joey gave little heed to it, since that was not the kind of a team Rupert had hired, until he saw the landlord come out hurriedly, and a moment later the lad whose acquaintance he had made, waved his hand frantically, as if beckoning for him to come over.

"Perhaps they have heard something from Rupert," Sadie suggested, and Joey was out of the wagon in a twinkling, running hurriedly up the street.

A moment later, to his great surprise, he saw that the boy in the market wagon was his cousin Rupert, who appeared to be in considerable pain, for he held his left arm stiffly, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, which were scratched and bloody.

When Joey came up the landlord was saying to the man who had brought Rupert back :

“So the carriage is smashed, eh?”

“It looks as if it wasn't worth haulin' home. The horse struck straight across lots, it seems, an' by the time he'd pulled the carriage through a hemlock grove an' over two or three stone walls, it don't stand to reason there'd be much of it left.”

“An' you say the horse is cut badly?”

“There's a big gash on his off hind leg that bled a good bit, so I waited till the blood could be stopped before startin' out with the boy.”

“How did it happen?” the landlord asked of Rupert; but that young gentleman groaned over his arm without making any reply, and the man who had brought him in, said:

“As near as I can make out, this boy was runnin' him down Rankin's hill, usin' the whip like all possessed. Just there by the waterin' trough he must have pulled the horse around, though for the life of me I can't make out why, an' then the trouble began, for you can see the marks of the wheel on the trough.”

“I thought you knew all about horses?” the landlord cried in a threatening tone as he turned toward Rupert. “Have you got money about your clothes to pay for the mischief you've done?”

“I want to be taken into the hotel, and my father will pay the bills when he comes,” Rupert said with a groan, and again the tears rolled down his bloody cheeks.

“I reckon the boy is hurt some considerable,” the owner of the market wagon said to Colonel Hartley. “You can see that his clothes are pretty nigh torn off of him, an’ he declares his arm is broken. If I was runnin’ this ’ere hotel I’d take him in an’ call a doctor. ’Cordin’ to what he says, his father is able to pay all the bills.”

“Yes, ’cordin’ to what he says,” the landlord replied angrily, “an’ ’cordin’ to what he said, he knew all about handlin’ a horse. There may be no more truth in the last story than there was in the first.”

“But he allows Deacon Jonas Crawford is his uncle, an’ if that’s the case you’ll get all that’s comin’ to you,” the owner of the market wagon added, and at this suggestion the landlord’s anger died away in a measure; but he turned toward Joey, as he asked:

“Is that lad your cousin?”

“Yes, sir, an’ his father was comin’ to our house this mornin’; but why don’t Roop go home with Sadie an’ me?”



"I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ALL ABOUT HORSES."

At the sound of Joey's voice Master Rupert looked up, and asked petulantly :

“Why don't you go right away and tell mother to come? I'll stop here, for I couldn't ride home with that half-dead horse of yours.”

“You'd better go home, sonny,” Colonel Hartley added. “I'll have a doctor here to look at his arm, an' you can tell your father that everything necessary will be done.”

“I won't have a doctor till mother gets here,” Rupert whined, and the landlord said grimly :

“I reckon I shall come pretty nigh runnin' things to suit myself, till your folks get here. Sam,” he added, looking around for the boy who had been pretending to clean the windows, “run over to Dr. Fellows' office, an' tell him to come an' look after Deacon Jonas Crawford's nephew.”

Rupert had given no heed to his cousin after declaring that he couldn't ride home behind Simon, and Joey knew of nothing better to do than explain to Sadie what had happened.

“Can I do anything for him?” she asked after hearing the story of the accident. “It don't seem right for us to go away and leave him here alone.”

“But that's what he wanted us to do, an' if you'd heard how he said it, I'm thinkin' you

couldn't get away soon enough," and Joey began to make ready for the journey.

"But he's hurt so badly that the men think he needs a doctor, and surely we ought to do all we can for him, no matter how disagreeable he may be. You must remember that he's father's only—"

"Stop right there, Sarah Crawford!" Joey cried sharply. "I don't want to hear any more about his bein' Aunt Marie's only boy! It's lucky for us she hasn't got but one, for if we'd had two like him at Hillside farm this past week, we'd been driven out of house an' home."

Then Joey clambered into the wagon, and old Simon, who was probably wondering why he had not been driven homeward two hours before, started off at an unusually rapid pace.

It was past six o'clock, and the children could not hope to arrive at the farm before nine. Both knew that even then their mother was anxious concerning them, and all the pleasure of the morning was forgotten as they thought of the trouble and mental distress their protracted stay was causing.

Joey did his best to urge Simon on at a trot; but after the first burst of speed the old fellow had relapsed into a jog which seemed unusually

slow, because of their desire to get over the ground swiftly.

Night came when they had accomplished no more than half the journey, and Sadie was struggling bravely to prevent tears of sorrow and disappointment from overflowing her eyes, when the rumble of an approaching wagon could be heard, causing Joey to guide old Simon out on the side of the road that there might be no difficulty in passing.

Then both the children were surprised into exclamations of joy and relief, as they heard their father's voice calling :

“ Are you there, my chickens ? ”

“ Oh, father, father ! ” Sadie screamed, and Joey cried :

“ Did you come after us ? ”

“ Of course I did ; are you all right ? ”

“ There's nothin' the matter with us ; but Roop has been kickin' up quite a row,” Joey replied, and then, hurriedly, he told as much as he knew of his cousin's misadventures.

Deacon Crawford made no comments ; but after remaining silent a moment, as if thinking the matter over, he said :

“ I reckon the boy's mother will want to go to him, though I can't believe he's hurt very

much if he could sit up and talk in his usual fashion. If I drive to Topsham now, I'll likely have to go right back with Maryann, so we may as well turn about here."

"You'd best take Sadie in with you, an' then you can go right along without waitin' for Simon," Joey suggested. "I s'pose mother'll be in a peck of trouble till she knows we're all right."

"You're a good son, Joey, an' I only wish Maryann had one in which she could take comfort," Deacon Crawford said as he turned his horse, and Joey felt that he would willingly endure the anxieties and annoyances of the afternoon half a dozen times over, in order to win such praise again.

Sadie clambered into her father's carriage, and the deacon's horse started homeward at a rapid pace, soon leaving the plodding Simon far behind; but Joey no longer fretted because of being forced to travel so slowly, nor did he worry any more about Betty. His heart was very light because of what his father had said, and he hardly knew whether Simon was walking or making believe trot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INVALID.

BEFORE Joey arrived home, a carriage in which were three persons passed him on the road, and he heard his father shout :

“I’ve taken care of Betty for you, son, so you’ll have nothin’ to do but go straight to bed after feedin’ Simon.”

“Father is takin’ Uncle John an’ Aunt Marie over to Topsham, an’ Colonel Hartley will have a chance to find out who’s goin’ to pay him for the damage done to the horse an’ wagon,” the lad said to himself, and then there came into his heart a fear lest Rupert might have been injured more seriously than at first appeared. “I s’pose he’s like the rest of the city boys, an’ can’t help actin’ the way he does, so I’m makin’ a pig of myself by bein’ cross.”

Half an hour later he drove into the yard of Hillside farm, and there on the stone door-step were his mother and Sadie awaiting his coming.

“What made you stay up for me?” he cried

cheerily. "I thought you'd go to bed as soon as father got back."

"Do you think we'd let you go to bed without any supper?" his mother asked, coming to the wheel of the wagon that she might take him by the hand caressingly. "Wait till Sadie gets the lantern, an' while you're takin' care of Simon, I'll put the things on the table."

Then Aunt Jane took his face in both her hands, and, pulling his head down toward hers, kissed him again and again, as if they had just met after a long separation.

Sadie came out with the lighted lantern, running on ahead to the stable, and Joey drove Simon behind her, feeling somehow as if he had been rewarded far beyond his deserts for the vexation of spirit caused by his cousin.

"So father had to go right back with Aunt Marie?" he said when Simon came to a halt in front of the stable door, and Sadie replied:

"Yes; she was certain Rupert had been hurt worse than you believed, and said she'd walk, if father didn't take her at once, so of course Uncle John had to go with her."

"Did mother worry very much because we didn't get home?" Joey asked, as he began to unharness Simon.

“She tried not to, because Aunt Marie was taking on so badly, declaring she was certain Simon had run away again, and it’s well she didn’t know that Rupert was out driving with a horse he’d never seen before. Mother didn’t ask father to go after us ; he walked back and forth from the stable to the house, till finally he said he couldn’t stand it any longer, and off he drove.”

Joey gave old Simon a good bed and a hearty supper, after which he peeped in at Betty, and found her standing knee-deep in fresh straw, looking so handsome that he couldn’t help putting his arms around her neck and kissing the brown nose.

“She’ll bring home the blue ribbon, Sadie, or it’ll be because they’ve stopped awardin’ prizes for heifers. Now that Roop’s likely to stay at Topsham, I’ll have plenty of time to look after her as she needs.”

“You’ll do that wherever he is, Joey, and I truly believe you’ll get the ribbon,” Sadie said confidently, and then the children went back to the house where their mother was awaiting them.

“It’s good to have our chickens home again,” Aunt Jane said as she seated herself at the bountifully-spread table, and then Joey learned that Sadie had refused to eat her supper until he had come.

Then, after the dishes had been washed and the table set to rights, Aunt Jane led the way out on the broad stone step again, and Joey asked in surprise :

“Ain’t we goin’ to bed, mother?”

“I thought we’d wait for father. There’s no reason why he should stay in Topsham very long, an’, knowin’ we’re alone, he’ll drive fast.”

Then, seated on the step, with an arm around each of her “chickens,” Aunt Jane sang to the children as she had sung when they were helpless mites in her arms, and thus the three spent the time until the deacon drove into the yard.

“I declare for it, mother, it made me feel young again to hear you singin’ to the babies, an’ if I never knew it before, I know now that God has been good to you an’ me past all our deservin’!”

“That is true, Jonas; an’ I’ve been thankin’ Him over an’ over again this evenin’. How is Rupert?”

“The doctor says he is scratched up a good deal, as anybody can see, an’ that his arm may be sprained a little; but there’s no sign it’s been hurt. I can’t but think he’s tryin’ to make himself out a good deal worse than he is, so there won’t be much said about the team he ruined. John Stockbridge will have a big bill to pay, for

Colonel Hartley won't let such a chance for sellin' an ordinary horse an' a second-hand carriage, slip past him without makin' a big fight."

"Will your sister stay in Topsham?"

"She told me that if Rupert was able to be moved, John would bring 'em down to the farm in the mornin'. After eatin' one meal at the Topsham House, she'll get an idee that you know somethin' 'bout cookin', mother. I paid fifty cents for a dinner there once, an' it was just so much money thrown away."

Then the deacon drove off toward the stable whistling cheerily, and Joey followed on behind with the lantern.

Half an hour later the Crawford family was asleep, and the sun had been looking over the hills next morning fully half an hour, when Aunt Jane called to Joey :

"Betty will think you've forgotten all about her if you don't get up soon. I'd hate to have the neighbors know that we'd slept on a summer mornin' till after sunrise."

At the breakfast table Deacon Crawford said to his wife :

"I reckon it won't be possible for me to get in a day's work before another night comes. Unless that boy can make his mother believe he's terribly

bad off, John an' Maryann will be here before noon, an' it ain't just the thing to leave John alone."

"I think, Jonas Crawford, that you can afford to idle away a few days while your only sister an' her husband are visitin' us for the first time. We'll work all the harder to make up for it after they're gone."

"I'll drive down to the depot an' see if I can't hire somebody to take my place, an' be back before there's any chance of their gettin' here," and the deacon hurriedly finished the meal, leaving his family at the table when he went to harness the horse.

Joey's face fell when his father spoke of the probability that his cousin would soon be back at the farm, and he hurried toward the stable, after explaining that Betty, having been almost neglected during one full day, needed more than ordinary attention if she was to be got into proper condition for the opening of the fair.

It was not yet ten o'clock when Joey, who had gone down to the onion beds after caring for Betty, heard Sadie calling him, and he knew without being told, that Rupert was coming back.

"They are driving down the road, and mother says you're to be at the house to speak with your

cousin!" Sadie cried, and Joey followed her promptly, but very unwillingly, arriving at the kitchen door just as the carriage from Topsham was brought to a stop at the front gate.

Mr. Stockbridge leaped out to assist his wife, and then came Rupert, his face covered with strips of adhesive plaster, and his arm in a sling. The lad was able to move about unaided, and Joey went up to him at once, as he said in a cheery tone :

"I'm glad to see that you wasn't hurt as badly as you first thought. How are you feelin'?"

"A good deal worse than I would be if you hadn't left me alone in that miserable town. What did you suppose I was going to do with myself while you and Sadie were off having a good time?"

"But it was you who left us!" Joey cried in amazement. "You said the agreement with your mother was that you should stop at the hotel, instead of goin' with us, an' that's why she gave you five dollars to spend."

"That isn't anything like what I told you," Rupert said angrily, and looking at his parents as if to learn whether they had heard Joey's words.

"What *did* you say?" and Joey's face was flaming red by this time, for it seemed to him

that his cousin had deliberately accused him of telling that which was not true.

“ You know, so there’s no need of my repeating it. If I could have gone where you did, I wouldn’t have been coaxed into driving a vicious horse.”

Joey no longer attempted to defend himself ; it bewildered him to hear Rupert speak as if he had not been allowed to go with him and his sister, and he could only stare at the lad who made such a monstrous assertion.

Sadie, however, was not silenced by the bold statement, nor did she intend that her aunt should be allowed to believe Rupert had not been welcome to share all their pleasures, and before her mother could check her, she said, going very near to her cousin and speaking so that every one might hear :

“ You know very well, Rupert, we expected you would go with us until you said your mother had given you money so you could get dinner at the hotel. You didn’t even want to be seen in the wagon with us ; but agreed to be ready at two o’clock to come home. Colonel Hartley told Joey you claimed to know all about horses, and only because of that did they let you have a team.”

Deacon Crawford, who had been a short distance away when Sadie began talking, now laid

his hand on the child's shoulder, as he said mildly :

“ We won't say anything more about it, sweetheart. Rupert has had a bad scare an' a nasty shake-up, so we can't expect him to remember exactly how it all happened. Joey, you'd best bring in some water for your mother, while she helps get your cousin up-stairs.”

“ I can walk very well without any help,” Rupert said sulkily, and then he disappeared within the house, his mother and father following a moment later.

When Aunt Jane went into the kitchen again she found Joey sitting by the window, his cheeks glowing, and the tears swimming in his eyes as if ready to flow.

“ Now Joey, dear,” his mother said as she kissed him tenderly. “ Are you mournin' over what Rupert said ?”

“ It wasn't true, mother, an' he made it seem as if I'd told a lie ! Uncle John and Aunt Marie will think I'm the meanest kind of a boy, an' I didn't suppose he had any thought of leavin' us to go off by himself, till we came in sight of the hotel.”

“ I know all that, my boy,” Aunt Jane said as she kissed the red cheeks. “ Rupert is your cousin,

an' what's more, he's visitin' us, so we mustn't have any trouble. Let the matter drop right where it is, an' try not to think of it again."

"Have I got to stay 'round where he is, an' make believe I've forgotten that he just the same as called me a liar?"

"No, Joey; I think that would be askin' too much of you," Aunt Jane said as she patted him on the shoulder. "Of course you must come in to your meals with the rest of us; but at other times you may work 'round the farm wherever you please."

With this understanding Joey went back to his task on the onion beds; but the color in his cheeks told that the sting of what Rupert had said still rankled in his heart.

Rupert was not at the dinner-table, for which there was good excuse, since his bandaged arm prevented him from feeding himself, and Joey did not linger after his hunger was appeased. Back he went to his work of weeding, and when the afternoon was nearly at an end he started up in surprise not unmixed with anger, for his cousin was coming directly toward him, picking his way daintily between the rows of onions.

"Look here, Joe," Rupert began while he was yet four or five yards away, talking rapidly as if

wishing to come speedily to the end of a disagreeable subject, "you ought to have sense enough to know I had to tell some kind of a story that would sound well, after getting into the scrape I did, and any decent fellow would have held his tongue, instead of blatting out the way you did."

"I only said what was the truth, an' you know it!" Joey cried hotly.

"Well, suppose it was the truth, what was the need of blowing it so loud? I spoke quickly so's you would know how I'd made up my mind to tell it, and when you saw that a cousin of yours was in such a hard place, you should have let it gone his way."

"Why?"

"Can't you see why?" Rupert cried angrily. "That man at the hotel wants to make father pay him two hundred and fifty dollars for the horse and carriage, and my only way is to make it look as if I had some good excuse for going off by myself."

"Why didn't you tell him the truth? No good ever comes of lyin'."

"Oh you are simple, or else you don't want to understand. If father thinks you and Sadie went away and left me, he won't be so angry because I hired the team, and I want both of you to tell

the story my way. I'd do the same thing for you any time, without half so much talk about it."

"We Crawfords tell a story just as it happened. It may be we don't know quite so much as you children who live in the city; but we'd be ashamed to tell a lie, even if it wasn't wicked."

"Oh, you're too good, you are!" Rupert said sneeringly. "So you Crawfords tell a story just as it happened, do you? Well, I'll stick to what I've already said, and we'll see if you can back me down."

"We shan't try to," Joey said, speaking more mildly as he remembered what his mother had said. "We told father an' mother how you left us, an' they believe we spoke the truth."

"We'll see whether they do or not," Rupert said threateningly, as if he knew of some way by which they could be made to believe him, and then he turned as if to go away; but paused long enough to ask once more:

"Then you won't try to help me out of a scrape?"

"I won't tell a lie about it, for that's what you mean," Joey replied firmly, and Rupert walked stiffly away with an expression on his face which was not pleasant to look upon.

"I reckon the whole family of Stockbridges

think I'm a pretty mean kind of a fellow," Joey said half to himself as he resumed his work of weeding. "I don't know which is worse—for Uncle John and Aunt Marie to think I sneaked off from Roop an' then lied about it, or for him to believe I'm cheap enough to be frightened into tellin' it his way. Anyhow, he wasn't hurt so terribly bad, else he wouldn't be walkin' 'round now lively as a cricket, an' it ain't likely he'll be willin' to stay here a great while after all he has said."

Joey ceased work in the field sufficiently early to be able to spend half an hour with Betty before supper, and while he was in the stall combing and brushing the handsome creature, he saw, through the cracks in the partition, Rupert enter the stable softly. After peering around cautiously as if to make sure no one was near, he tip-toed across the floor as if intending to enter the calf's stall.

When he was within three or four feet of the door, and his hand was outstretched as if to lift the latch, Deacon Crawford called from the lane:

"Joey! Joey! Open the door of the tie-up, for I've brought the cows in from pasture!"

It was possible to obey the command without going where Rupert could see him, and Joey de-

layed only long enough to watch his cousin steal out of the stable hurriedly, as if afraid of being seen there.

“ Now what did he mean by all that ? ” the boy asked of himself. “ It’s certain he was up to some kind of mischief, else why shouldn’t he come into the stable without sneakin’ ? ”

“ What seems to be troublin’ you, son ? ” Deacon Crawford asked when he saw the look of bewilderment and anxiety on the boy’s face.

“ I’d rather not tell you yet a while, father, ” Joey said thoughtfully.

“ Ain’t sick, are you ? ”

“ Not a bit of it. I’ve just been lookin’ after Betty, but want to see Sadie a little minute. ”

“ She has been down to the pasture with me ; you’ll find her out by the gooseberry bushes, I reckon, ” the deacon said cheerily, and Joey hurried away, for Sadie was the one member of the family whom he felt he could talk plainly with just then.

He found his sister without any very lengthy search, and the two, hidden from view of those in the house by the bushes, held a long and serious consultation. Joey began by telling her of the proposition Rupert had made to him, and concluded with an account of their cousin’s behavior

in the stable, asking, when he was come to an end of his stories :

“ Now what do you s’pose he meant by sneakin’ ’round in that way ? ”

“ Oh, Joey, *do* you believe he could be as mean as that ? ” Sadie cried suddenly, and the lad asked in surprise :

“ As mean as what ? Why do you s’pose he didn’t want anybody to see him in the stable ? ”

“ Joey ! ” and Sadie really looked frightened as she spoke, “ do you think he could be so mean as to do anything to Betty, so she couldn’t win the prize ? ”

“ Why should he want to do her any harm ? ” and now Joey was bewildered.

“ So’s you would feel badly, and out of spite because you wouldn’t lie to help him make up a good story. But no that isn’t possible, of course. Nobody could be so mean ! ”

Joey did not waste much time speculating upon the possibilities of what Rupert would be willing to do ; his suspicions were aroused to such an extent that he could see no other reason for his cousin’s stealthy entrance to the stable, save that of trying to prevent Betty from winning the blue ribbon, and now his one thought was as to how he might best guard his pet.

“Don’t worry, Joey,” Sadie said coaxingly, almost frightened because of having thus suggested a meaning for Rupert’s movements. “I’ll help you watch her, and he can’t get into the stable without one of us seeing him. Besides, after he’s had time to think it all over, he won’t dare do such a thing.”

“I ain’t goin’ to take the chances of our bein’ able to stop him!” Joey cried passionately. “This is the only time in Betty’s life when she’s got any chance of takin’ the blue ribbon for yearlin’s, an’ she shan’t be cheated out of it by Roop Stockbridge!”

“Oh dear, oh dear,” Sadie wailed in distress, “I wish I hadn’t said anything—No, I don’t; but I do wish you didn’t feel so certain that was what he wanted. It would be terrible to tell father that his only sister’s only boy could be so mean!”

“I ain’t countin’ on sayin’ anything to him about it. You go back to the house, an’ if mother asks for me, say I won’t be in to supper for quite a spell.”

“But what are you going to do, Joey?”

The owner of Betty looked cautiously around to make certain there was no one within sound of his voice, and then whispered in his sister’s ear:

“I’m goin’ to take Betty down to the hay barn

without lettin' anybody know a word about it. She shall stay there to-night, an' in the morning I'll have some plan rigged up to put her where that—where Roop can't find her."

Sadie was really relieved at learning that her brother had nothing more alarming in mind, and promised that there should be no questions regarding his absence from the supper table.

Then Joey, after assuring himself that no one in the house could see him as he entered the stable through the rear door, took such steps as he believed to be absolutely necessary for the safety of Betty.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MATTER OF BUSINESS.

WHEN, fully half an hour after the supper dishes had been washed, Joey entered the kitchen, his mother asked no questions as to why he was so late, and he understood that Sadie had made such explanations as were necessary.

“You’ll find your supper on the pantry shelf, Joey, an’ you may as well eat it there so’s to save mussin’ up the kitchen. When you get through, come out on the front steps where the company is,” Aunt Jane said while Joey was washing his hands and face, and he replied :

“I guess I’d better go right away to bed, for I’m countin’ on gettin’ up bright an’ early to-morrow mornin’.”

“I’m thinkin’ none of us will sleep very late, not even your aunt an’ Rupert ; but you’re not to go to bed until after seein’ your father ; he’s got some business matters to talk over with you.”

“Business matters ?” Joey repeated in perplexity. “What’s goin’ on now ?”

“He will do his own talkin’, son, after you’ve finished your supper,” Aunt Jane said as she went through the dining-room on her way to the front steps, and Joey was so perplexed by her words that he did not give himself time to eat as much as he otherwise would have done.

After having had barely sufficient to satisfy his hunger, he went around the outside of the house until he saw his father walking to and fro in the yard with Mr. Stockbridge, and there he remained until the deacon, espying him, said cheerily :

“Well, Joey, I’ve been waitin’ for you ; there’s a little matter of business to be settled ’twixt you an’ me, an’ then I reckon it’ll be our bedtime.”

As he spoke Deacon Crawford walked toward the gate, while Mr. Stockbridge joined the family on the front steps, and, filled with wonderment because of what appeared to be a mystery, Joey followed his father.

“Let me see,” the deacon began when he and his son were beyond earshot of the others, “Tops-ham fair begins next Tuesday, don’t it ?”

“Yes, sir,” Joey said hesitatingly, growing yet more surprised by such a question.

“An’ to-morrow is Friday. I can’t well get home before Wednesday or Thursday, an’ you’ll

have to 'tend to my business as well as your own. I'm allowin' you'll do it all right, so my bein' away can't make any great difference."

"Are you goin' to make a visit?" Joey asked in a whisper, for the idea of his father leaving the farm to be absent more than one day, was something so unusual as to be actually bewildering.

"Well, you can't really call it visitin', son, though I s'pose I'll stay with your uncle while I'm away."

"Then Roop—I mean, Rupert, is goin' home?" and Joey spoke in a tone of delight.

"No, son, he an' his mother will stay here; your uncle an' I have got some business in the city that can't be put off any longer, an' I'm obleeged to go in order to keep a promise I've the same as made. You'll have to look after the farm, an', what's more, 'tend to the business at the fair for both of us."

"When are you goin' away?" Joey asked in a sorrowful tone, for it seemed to him at that moment as if with his father's absence all hope of Betty's winning the blue ribbon had fled.

"On the first train in the mornin'. You're to take your uncle an' me to the depot. I've hired Zenas Downs to do my part of the work; but he'll

do it under your orders, for I'm countin' that you will stand in my shoes. Tuesday mornin', 'long 'bout four o'clock, you an' he had better start for the fair with the cattle. He can drive the oxen, while I allow you'll hitch Betty to the hind end of the baggage wagon, an' drive over with Simon. Zenas can come back with the horse, leavin' you to stay with the live stock."

"Do you mean that I'm to stay at the fair every night?" and Joey's bewilderment seemed to be increasing as his father's plans were unfolded.

"It looks to me as if that's what ought'er be done; but if you can hire somebody who may be trusted, to take care of the cattle, do it. The amount of the story is, Joey, that you're to run this thing 'cordin' to your best judgment, an' what I'm sayin' is only to show you how I'd get about it. I thought Zenas could get home with Simon, if you started as early as four o'clock, in time to drive the family over with one of the other horses. I've hired a double carriage of Colonel Hartley, an' he'll hitch into it, leavin' the old wagon in Topsham. Here's five dollars, son, an' I'm countin' you'll make a better showin' with it than Rupert did on the same amount which his mother gave him."

Joey put the money carefully in his pocket, and tried to decide whether now was not the time when he should tell his father of the suspicions he and Sadie entertained in regard to the possibility of Rupert's doing mischief if the opportunity offered. It seemed to the boy as if, while his father was away, Betty would be at the mercy of any one who might be cruel enough to harm her, and the hope of winning the blue ribbon was growing less each moment.

"What's the matter, son?" Deacon Crawford asked as he laid his hand on Joey's shoulder. "You're actin' kinder down at the heel."

"I'm sorry you're goin' away, father, an' that's a fact," Joey replied decidedly.

"I wouldn't like to have you feelin' glad over it, son; but there's no call for borrowin' trouble. I'll be back in time to see the blue ribbon on Betty's neck as she parades with the other winners in front of the grand stand, an' as for the business end of it, I've got confidence enough in you to believe everything will go on as smooth as if I was here to look after it. Remember that you'll be in charge of the farm, an' I want you to take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, without thinkin' that you must go to your mother for orders. She understands that things are to

be run as you direct, while I'm away, an' believes as I do, that it's a good idea to find out what kind of a head for business you've got."

"But I'm afraid I shan't keep things goin' right, father," Joey cried, almost frightened at the thought of having full control of Hillside farm at the same time that he was to look after his own and his father's interests at the fair.

"The Book tells us that a wise—meanin' at the same time good—son maketh a glad father, an' that's what you've always made me, Joey boy. I ain't hankerin' to go to the city, for I'm bound there on business that I may be sorry for in time to come; but it's givin' me a chance to see how you'll get along when I've gone over into the next world, an' that's why I want you to run things 'cordin' to your own best judgment."

Then the deacon, taking Joey's head in his hands, kissed him on the forehead, and walked back to his guests on the front steps, while the boy, his heart filled at the same time with sadness and joy, went down into the orchard, for just then he most wanted to be alone.

It seemed to him that his father had placed too heavy a burden on his shoulders. If he had been left to look after the work on the farm only, or

if the business of showing cattle at the fair had been entrusted to him at a time when Rupert was not where he could possibly do mischief, he might acquit himself creditably; but to have full charge of everything just when it appeared necessary he should keep a sharp watch over his cousin, was more than he felt able to do properly.

He was still studying over the matter when Sadie came into the orchard, and, slipping her hand into his, whispered :

“ I know all about it, Joey dear. Father is going to the city to lend Uncle John some money, and you’re to take his place while he’s gone. Mother says she ain’t a bit afraid but you’ll get along all right.”

“ She don’t know that we’re fearin’ somethin’ will happen to Betty,” Joey said gloomily.

“ I told her enough to let her understand that Betty must be watched carefully, and I think she guessed a good deal. I’ll go down to the hay barn and stay there all the time you’re at the depot; after that it will be strange if both of us can’t keep our eyes on him.”

Before they had time to say anything more Aunt Jane called them into the house, for, in view of the fact that the deacon and Mr. Stock-

bridge would be forced to start as early as five o'clock in order to catch the first train, it was high time the family went to bed.

The sun had not risen next morning when Joey visited Betty at the hay barn, and did what was necessary for her comfort and well-being, after which he ate breakfast. Zenas Downs had already arrived to care for the stock, milk the cows, and do such other work as was usually attended to by the deacon.

When Joey drove up to the door with old Simon harnessed into his father's best carriage, Sadie met him to say that Rupert had not yet come down-stairs, but she would go at once to stay with Betty until her brother's return from the station.

Deacon Crawford did not have the appearance of a man who is setting off on a pleasure excursion, when he got into the carriage with Mr. Stockbridge. To tell the truth, he was not a little homesick already, and but for the urgency of the business would have remained at home rather than go away, even for a few days, from those whom he loved so dearly.

Joey cracked the whip as soon as the last words had been spoken, and old Simon, proud, perhaps, of the fine harness and new carriage, started off

as if it was his intention to trot a full mile before relapsing into his customary lazy jog.

Then Sadie went to the hay barn, and because her mother did not ask any questions as to why she was leaving the house before the morning's work had been done, was fairly good proof that Aunt Jane understood the situation better than the children fancied.

When Joey returned, half an hour later, Rupert met him in the yard in a most friendly manner, even offering to do what he might to help him with the work while his father was away, and for the moment this sudden change of demeanor so perplexed and surprised Betty's master that he could make no reply ; but after a time he succeeded in saying, that, because Zenas Downs had come, there would probably be nothing which he could not readily attend to alone.

" Besides," he added, realizing that he was not meeting Rupert's overtures in quite the proper spirit, " you ain't in very good shape to knock around a farm. How's your arm this mornin' ? "

" It's a good deal better, and there isn't any need of my keeping it in a sling ; but I thought it would be better to make out that I was hurt pretty bad, till after father got through scolding," Rupert said with a laugh, as if he thought it a

joke to deceive his parents. "It's lucky for me father had to go away so soon, else I might have got it rough."

Joey did not know what reply to make; he failed to understand why a boy would be willing to make his parents believe he had been injured severely, simply that he might escape a scolding which was richly deserved, and would have driven on to the stable, but that Rupert insisted on riding the short distance with him.

"How'll you fix it about taking the calf to the fair, now that your father is away?" the lad asked as he clambered into the carriage.

"I can take care of her and the oxen too, so father thinks," Joey replied thoughtfully, for he was wondering why Rupert should so suddenly be deeply interested in Betty.

"How?"

It seemed to Joey only right he should explain to his cousin how the matter was to be arranged, and to his consternation Rupert said gleefully, when he understood that Betty's master would remain on the fair grounds, or in Topsham, three days:

"Say, that will be great, won't it? I'll stay with you, and we'll have no end of a good time!"

"It seems as if you ought'er stop here on the

farm nights, else the women folks may be lonesome," Joey said hesitatingly, not caring to tell his cousin outright that he did not want him as a companion at that time. "You'll come over every mornin', for father has hired a double carriage, an' Zenas will do the drivin'."

"Not much I won't; I'll go with you, and we'll show the people at Topsham how to have a good time!" Rupert cried decidedly.

"But I shall have to stay with the cattle every minute, an' that'll be dull work for you."

"I'll bet you can be coaxed away from the beloved calf if I have plenty of money to spend, and I'm going to tell mother this very minute that she's got to give me the cash I need, if she expects me to do as father said."

Eager to provide himself with a supply of spending money, Rupert did not wait till Simon had been stabled; but ran back swiftly to the house, and Joey muttered as he cared for the horse:

"I wonder what it is his mother said he must do? It wouldn't surprise me a little bit if she'd hired him to be friends with me, else why is he so terribly sweet this mornin'? But I *can't* have him around while I'm at the fair! Oh dear, oh dear, how he is mixin' things up! I believe I'd

almost rather stop tryin' for Betty to win the blue ribbon, than have him swellin' 'round, most likely gettin' into trouble !”

Then, as a new thought came into his mind, he hurriedly led Simon into the stable, and ran with all speed to the hay barn.

Sadie, watching from the inside, through the cracks in the door, saw her brother coming, and ran out to meet him, asking as she saw the expression on his face :

“ What is it ? What has happened ? ”

“ Roop was awfully pleasant when I got back from the depot, an' went out to the stable with me, askin' questions about Betty. I had to tell him I was to stay on the grounds all the time the fair lasted.”

“ Well ? ” Sadie asked impatiently as her brother paused.

“ Well, he declares that he's goin' with me, an' says we'll show the folks in Topsham how to have a good time.”

Joey then repeated the conversation as it had taken place, and Sadie really looked alarmed, as she whispered :

“ We'll have to tell mother the whole story now, and see if she can't do something to prevent him from going.”

“ You go on an’ tell her ; after I water Betty, an’ build a better stall than this one, I’ll come up to the house. If Roop goes out of doors, make it your business to see what he’s about.”

All was done as Joey desired, and when, about an hour before noon, he went to the farmhouse, Rupert was sitting on the kitchen door-step talking with Sadie.

“ Mother says it’s all right about my going to the fair with you !” he shouted while his cousin was yet a long distance away, and Joey muttered under his breath :

“ It does beat all, how much of trouble that fellow kicks up whenever he ain’t sulkin’.”

Aunt Jane glanced meaningly at Joey as he entered the kitchen, and the boy believed she was warning him against making a hasty reply. He washed his face and hands deliberately, watching meanwhile until his mother entered the pantry, when he followed her, whispering after the door was shut :

“ Did Sadie tell you anything ?”

“ Yes, son, an’ while I can’t think he would deliberately do that which might harm Betty, I don’t want him to stay at Topsham with you.”

“ But how can we stop him ? He says he’ll have plenty of money to spend, an’ if that’s so,

you can make up your mind he'll show himself a bigger simple than when he hired Colonel Hartley's team. The worst of it all is, that folks will think I'm glad to have him with me."

"There's no use mournin' over it, Joey dear," Aunt Jane said soothingly. "Perhaps somethin' will change his ideas between now an' fair time, an' we'll hope for that."

At dinner-time Joey learned to his confusion that he was expected to take his father's place in all things pertaining to the house as well as farm, for his mother looked at him significantly when it was time to ask a blessing, and it did not give him any additional confidence in himself when he heard Rupert laugh outright as he bowed his head.

During the afternoon he and his sister had no opportunity for holding a private conversation, for their cousin remained with one or the other all the time, and Joey was so uncharitable as to believe that the boy had been persuaded, or hired, by his mother to treat them in such an effusively friendly way while the deacon was making arrangements to loan Mr. Stockbridge the money he needed.

Rupert's seeming friendship served to keep the children from worrying lest he might do some mischief to Betty, however, and by the time night

had come Joey was almost persuaded that if he had had any such idea in mind, it was now abandoned.

When Joey read the evening lesson his cousin was present ; but on this occasion he did not venture to make sport, as at the dinner-table, except that he looked up and winked in a meaning way, as if to say he thought it a very good joke.

From that time until Monday morning, the day before Joey was to start to the fair, nothing particularly disagreeable occurred at Hillside farm.

Rupert was evidently trying hard to be very friendly with his cousins, and only now and then did he say anything unkind. He had at first been curious as to the whereabouts of Betty ; but when he found that neither the children, nor their mother, intended to make any definite explanation as to why the calf had been taken from the stable, or where she then was, he seemingly lost all interest in her.

Nothing had happened to take away the desire to go to the fair with Joey, and remain there the entire three days. Once Aunt Jane mildly ventured to suggest that he, who was not interested in cattle, would find it dull work staying there so long ; but he said pertly :

“I’ve made up my mind to go, and mother has agreed to give me what money I need, so there’s no use making any talk about it.”

When Sadie proposed that he would find it very much more pleasant to drive over every morning and back at night, he declared that there “wasn’t money enough in the whole Crawford family to hire him to ride behind the best of their horses.”

“He’s goin’,” Joey said tearfully to Sadie on this Monday morning when the two met at the hay barn, “an’ before to-morrow night he’ll do somethin’ to make me ashamed I ever saw him.”

Since Sadie was of much the same opinion, she could say nothing to encourage him ; but repeated the words her mother had used that very morning :

“All we can do is hope that something will happen between now an’ the time you’re ready to start.”

“I’ve been waitin’ for that ever since father went away, an’ it seems as if he was more set on goin’ than at first. I’ve a good mind to give up lettin’ Betty try for the blue ribbon, an’ take only the oxen. Zenas could stay with them, an’ I wouldn’t stand the chance of gettin’ into some kind of a fuss.”

“You mustn’t even think of keeping Betty

back!" Sadie cried vehemently. "I'd rather tell Rupert right up and down that we didn't want him with you, than miss seeing the pretty little calf parading with the blue ribbon on her neck."

"I don't believe you could say anything that would stop him," Joey replied with a gesture of despair, and then the approach of their cousin interrupted the conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

GOING TO TOPSHAM.

JOEY spent the day before he was to start for the fair, looking after this or that piece of work which he knew his father would want attended to, and was so very busy that he really did not have time to care for Betty as he had counted on doing ; but the calf did not suffer from neglect, for Sadie combed and brushed until her coat was almost as bright as Aunt Jane's milk-pans.

Rupert walked around the farm more than he had ever done before ; but he was so friendly, and seemed to think so much of the visit to Topsham, that his cousins came to believe he did not meditate any mischief against Betty.

Joey came up from the west field half an hour before it was time for supper, and, meeting Sadie near the hay barn, his first question was as to whether anything had been done to discourage Rupert from staying on the fair grounds during the three days of the exhibition.

“ He's bound to go,” Sadie replied sorrowfully. “ Of course mother can't say right up and down

that you don't want him ; but she told Aunt Marie this afternoon she was afraid Rupert would be lonely and dissatisfied when it came to sleeping on a pile of straw in a stable, as you count on doing."

"What did she say to that?" Joey asked hopefully.

"Only that 'dear little Rupert' had set his mind on going, and it would be useless for her to say anything against it. There's but one way for you, Joey, and that is to make the best of what will be very bad, unless he acts differently from the way he has done here on the farm. You're bound to go, because father is away and expects you to show the oxen ; but it does seem as if you might contrive to keep away from our cousin."

"I'll promise that he won't have a very gay time if he stays where I am, an' rather than have him kick up a row with the cattle, I'll give him a thumpin', that's what I'll do !"

"Of course it's wrong to fight, Joey, and respectable boys wouldn't do anything of the kind, unless it was to protect themselves," Sadie said decidedly, and then, lowering her voice to a whisper, she added, "It is just as much your right to take care of the cattle and Betty, as it

would be to look out for yourself, and I hope you'll do it !”

Then, as if frightened because of having counseled such a course, Sadie ran rapidly toward the house, leaving her brother to complete his preparations for the journey which was to be begun at such an early hour next morning.

He loaded into the baggage wagon a bushel of carrots, which were to be fed to Betty by way of dainties ; three bundles of clean, yellow straw, intended as a bed for himself, spare buckets, halters, and, in fact, everything he thought it possible he might need.

Joey knew that his mother and sister would pack in the big valise which had been owned by Grandfather Crawford, such of his personal belongings as he might need during the stay of three days, and he counted on their bringing him sufficient food, so that he would not be under the necessity of buying anything to eat. He was after a blue ribbon for Betty ; but did not intend to spend any more money getting it than would be absolutely necessary.

“ If Roop sleeps in the cattle shed with me to-morrow night, I reckon that'll be all the fair he'll need,” Joey said grimly, as, his preparations made, he walked slowly toward the house. “ It

surely does seem as if I could keep him straight one day, an' then he'll be good an' ready to come home with his mother."

At the supper table Rupert asked particularly concerning the arrangements Joey had made for sleeping, and when Aunt Jane suggested that it would be hard for him to "rough it" as his cousin would be forced to do, he declared boisterously that he knew of nothing which could give him more pleasure.

"Don't lose your temper," Aunt Jane said that night when she went into Joey's room after he was in bed. "I expect you'll have a hard time, Joey dear; but remember that he's your father's only sister's only boy."

"I'll keep my temper all right, mother, just so long as he don't try to make trouble, an' then I count on lettin' him think he's a pair of twins, instead of an only boy, for I'm goin' to Topsham to show the cattle, instead of standin' 'round to let him have fun with me."

Joey fully expected that his mother would reprove him for even intimating that he might adopt strenuous methods with Rupert in case it became necessary; but much to his surprise she remained silent while one might have counted ten, and then said:

“ I don’t believe you’ll do anythin’ wrong, son ; but I want you to keep ever in mind that ‘ he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’ Do as you think your father would advise, an’ I shall be satisfied.”

Joey believed he could safely promise this much, and at the same time carry out the plan of action toward his cousin which he had laid down for himself.

It seemed to Joey as if he had no more than fallen asleep, when his mother laid her hand on his cheek, as she said :

“ It’s half-past two, son. Zenas has just gone out to feed Simon an’ the cattle you’re to take with you. Breakfast will be ready by the time you’re dressed.”

“ But I didn’t count on your gettin’ up, mother,” Joey cried as he sprang out of bed. “ I told Zenas last night that he was to waken me without disturbin’ you.”

“ An’ I didn’t intend to let you go with an empty stomach, while Sadie would be dreadfully disappointed if she couldn’t see Betty as she started off to get the blue ribbon.”

“ What about Roop ? ”

“ I knocked on his mother’s door before I came

here ; it is just possible he'll decide not to get up so early."

"There's no such good luck as that," Joey replied grimly, and then he hurriedly began to dress.

Ten minutes later he was in the kitchen, where Zenas Downs was already eating as if he did not expect to see any more food for several days, and Sadie was packing a big basket with the provisions which Aunt Jane seemed to believe two boys could eat in three days, although it is a question if four men would have devoured such a quantity in a full week.

Before Joey had time to say anything, Rupert entered the kitchen looking decidedly ill-tempered, as he said petulantly :

"Why didn't you start yesterday, instead of getting up in the middle of the night, like this?"

"There's no need of your turnin' out so early, for Zenas will be back here ready to start over again by eight o'clock," Joey replied cheerily.

"I'm going with you ; but you might have told me yesterday what time you intended to leave."

"It has been spoken of often enough at the table for you to have known all about it," Sadie said with a laugh. "What difference would it have

made even if Joey had printed a notice so you could keep it in mind?"

"I should have seen to it that he went yesterday," Rupert said in a surly tone, and Joey replied :

"Not much you wouldn't. Father laid out for us to leave at this time, an' I should have stuck to his plan."

Rupert seated himself at the table, declared that he didn't want to eat anything of all that he saw there, and concluded by displaying an appetite which rivalled the one Zenas had with him.

When the meal was at an end Joey went out for Betty while Zenas brought old Simon to the door, and when the calf was hitched to the end of the wagon in such a manner that she could not get her feet in the wheels, but would be forced to keep pace with the horse, Rupert appeared with two large satchels.

"It seems to me that you're takin' a good deal of baggage," Aunt Jane ventured to say, and the lad replied sharply :

"I never travel without clothes enough, and you can't expect me to show myself, even at a country fair, in the same suit every day."

"It won't be the handiest thing in the world to dress yourself very fine in a cattle shed," Joey said

with a laugh, and then, after kissing his mother and sister, he jumped up on the wagon beside Rupert, as Sadie called merrily :

“Be sure that all the people see Betty, and then there’ll be no question about your bringing back the blue ribbon.”

Zenas came down the lane with the oxen yoked, and the little procession started off on the Tops-ham road.

“Your mother didn’t get up,” Joey said by way of opening a conversation with his sulky-looking cousin, and Rupert replied sharply :

“No, she didn’t think it worth while to make such a fool of herself as your mother did.”

“It’s lucky for you that my mother was willin’ to make a fool of herself, else you’d be startin’ without any breakfast,” Joey replied mildly, keeping in mind that which had been said to him the night before.

“It wouldn’t have made much difference to me, for I could have got all I wanted at the hotel.”

“Are you goin’ to board there?” and a great hope suddenly sprang up in Joey’s heart, to be crushed immediately, however, as his cousin said carelessly :

“I’ll leave my baggage there ; but I intend to see what it is like on the fair grounds for at least

one night, so that I'll have something to tell my friends when I get home."

"I never stayed there longer than one day ; but it don't strike me there'll be very much fun goin' on after the gates are closed. All hands will have work to do, makin' ready for the next day, an' you'll have the place to yourself."

Rupert made no reply, and during ten minutes or more neither of the lads spoke. Betty seemed to understand that she must be on her good behavior if she would carry off the prize, and old Simon was perfectly willing to walk as slowly as Joey thought necessary. Zenas and the oxen were trudging on in advance, moving considerably faster than did the horse, and when they were nearly lost to view in the distance, Rupert cried, as if he had just realized that theirs was literally a snail's pace :

"Why don't you send the old scarecrow on faster? The fair will be over before we get there."

"I ain't countin' on lettin' Betty walk any faster than she's goin' now," and Joey spoke decidedly.

"Why not? What harm will it do her to run a little?"

"In the first place I don't want to get her

heated up, an' then again she might pull back an' chafe the hair off her head."

"Look here, Joe, you folks make regular fools of yourselves over that runt of a calf. I've seen thousands and thousands that were worth more money than she is. I wouldn't give you ten cents for her, with the skeleton of a horse such as you are driving, thrown in."

"One reason why you wouldn't, is that Betty ain't for sale at any price. I'm not sayin' that you haven't seen better calves; but I don't understand where they were, seein's you've said you never went to a cattle show. Betty's mother is a full-blooded, registered Jersey, an' father paid ninety-five dollars for her; I've already had an offer of forty dollars for Betty."

"Forty dollars for that thing? Why the folks around here must be crazy!"

"I've seen some here that acted as if they were," Joey said with a chuckle of satisfaction at what he thought was a good shot at his cousin, but Master Rupert remained in blissful ignorance that he had been aimed at.

Another time of silence, and then the lad from the city aimed a blow at Simon with a halter which lay near his feet in the bottom of the wagon, and the old horse, surprised by the suddenness of

the attack when he had been allowed to believe he might go on at his own gait, jumped forward, pulling Betty down on her knees.

Joey had been taken quite as much by surprise as was the horse ; but he quickly pulled old Simon to a standstill, and then got out to see if the skin on the calf's knees had been broken.

It was if he had a hard struggle to prevent himself from speaking angrily, and he seemed trying to control himself while apparently shortening the halter.

Then, when the flush of anger had faded from his face, he said as he clambered into the wagon once more :

“ Before we go any further, Rupert, I want you to understand that I'm the one who is drivin' this horse, an' he'll go as I want him to. Don't strike him again, for there's a chance of hurtin' Betty past all hope of her takin' the prize.”

“ But suppose I want to strike him ? ”

“ It won't make any difference whether you want to or not ; I'm advisin' you not to do it.”

“ Oh, you are ? Well there is no reason why I should take your advice, and if you don't make him go faster I'll hit him such a clip as will make him see stars ! ”

“ You won't while I'm watchin', an' if you try

anything of that kind, it'll be a case of walkin' from here to Topsham an' carryin' your baggage with you, for I shall put you out in short order."

Joey spoke very mildly ; it was as if he was making a statement which he knew would be pleasing to his cousin, and Rupert looked at him in astonishment.

"I'd like to see you lay your hands on me !" he finally cried, brandishing his fists.

"There won't anything of that kind happen so long as you behave yourself ; but I made up my mind last night that if you tried to be funny with me, or anything that's under my care, I'd put an end to it. I'm goin' to Topsham fair for three days, an' you won't be allowed to interfere in my business."

Then, Betty having come to understand that being thrown to her knees was the result of an accident, Joey started old Simon once more, and Rupert sat looking at the end of his own nose as if trying to decide what had caused such a change in the boy whom he had believed could be imposed upon with impunity.

Not until an hour had passed, and they were within sight of the town, did Rupert speak again, and then he said in an angry tone as he displayed his pocket-book :

“ I did intend to give you the time of your life, Joe Crawford, while we stayed at the fair, and you can see that I had money enough to do it. Mother gave me seven dollars for being sweet with you and your sister while father was away, and you might have had your share of it ; but now I'll spend it all myself.”

“ That's the way to do. If you earned seven whole dollars simply by bein' sweet to Sadie an' me, it was just like findin' money, an' I hope you'll have a good time ; but I don't want any part of it. All I'm reckonin' on is that you shan't make trouble for me,” and Joey spoke in a calm, even tone, although in his heart he was very angry at learning that it had been necessary to hire any person to be friendly with his sister and himself.

“ I'll stop at the hotel, and take my baggage with me,” Rupert said stiffly as he replaced the money in his pocket, and Joey replied cheerily :

“ Do you want me to stop on the corner, or are you willin' to drive right up to the door in this old wagon, with a calf tied on behind ?”

“ I'll get out just as quickly as I can,” Rupert snarled, and although they were yet some distance from the corner where the lad had left his cousins during the first visit to Topsham, Joey pulled old

Simon up, and the boy from the city could not well do otherwise than walk the remaining distance.

“ I hope I didn’t say anything very rough to him, seein’s his mother is father’s sister ; but it was a good thing he got mad, for now I can ’tend to business without bein’ afraid of what he may do,” Joey said to himself as he drove in the direction of the fair grounds, and so well satisfied was he with the situation that he began whistling merrily while Rupert was yet within hearing.

Zenas was already on the grounds and had cared for the oxen, when Joey drove in through the big gates.

“ What did you do with your cousin ?” he asked in surprise at seeing Joey alone.

“ He got mad because I wouldn’t let him run old Simon while Betty was pullin’ behind, an’ has gone over to the hotel to stop.”

“ Wa’al,” Zenas said thoughtfully, “ I don’t want to say anything against your own folks, for you ought’er know their ways best ; but if I was in your place, I’d rather pay that fellow’s bills at the hotel, than have him hangin’ ’round. I ain’t got any use for that kind of boys.”

“ I guess we’ll both have it easier if he stays where he is,” and Joey began unfastening Betty,

that he might lead her into the pen where she could stand knee-deep in the yellow straw. "You'd better take Simon an' go to the hotel after the carriage father hired, for there isn't more than time to get back at the hour mother reckoned on startin'. We'll leave the baggage wagon where it is, an' I'll pull it out of the way later."

"Nothin' you want me to say to the folks at home?" Zenas asked as he obeyed the command.

"No; it isn't such a great while since I saw them, an' they are likely to be here soon, for you'll drive back with the other horse. Perhaps you'd better not say anything about Roop's goin' to the hotel, unless mother should ask you right out."

"I reckon I know when to wag my tongue, an' when to keep it between my teeth," Zenas replied sagely, and then Joey was left alone to make ready for the coming of visitors.

It goes without saying that Betty was combed and brushed until every particle of dust which had fallen on her sleek hide during the journey, had been removed, and then Joey paid the same careful attention to the oxen, after which he stored his belongings, they having been left in the

baggage wagon all this time, in a small shed just behind Betty's pen.

Before the morning's work was done a throng of people was passing and repassing, and the boy heard more than one give words of praise to Betty.

"She's the likeliest heifer here," one farmer said emphatically. "Jonas Crawford always has declared that it don't pay to raise any except the best of stock, an' I'm beginnin' to believe he's right."

"All of his family don't seem to believe the same way," another farmer replied with a laugh. "Did you see that city boy down at the hotel who's tryin' to cut a big swarth? He's Jonas Crawford's nephew, an' the kind of stock that I wouldn't like to be obleeged to raise."

Then the two passed on, and Joey's heart began to grow as heavy as it previously had been light. When Rupert left him in anger, he had the idea that it would not be possible for the lad to do him any injury while he remained at a distance; but now he understood that the people round about knew who he was, and because they spoke of him as "Jonas Crawford's nephew," instead of calling him the son of John Stockbridge, seemed much like a reproach upon the Crawfords.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAIR.

JOEY soon had other matters to think about, therefore he did not spend much time just then in speculating as to what his cousin might be doing at the hotel.

The farmers were eager to see what cattle Deacon Crawford had entered, and Joey had quite as much as he could well attend to, as he answered their many questions, therefore the time passed so quickly that he was really surprised when Sadie and her mother suddenly appeared.

“Why, how did you happen to come so early?” he asked, as Sadie entered the pen to pet Betty.

“It isn’t early; we’re an hour later than mother counted on; but Zenas was so long coming home with Simon that we couldn’t get away any sooner. Where is Rupert?”

Joey told in the fewest words possible of what had happened during the journey, and Sadie

looked positively pleased ; but her mother said gravely :

“I am sorry, son, that you had to provoke him, because if anything goes wrong Aunt Marie will blame you, as she did when Colonel Hartley’s horse ran away with him.”

“But you couldn’t expect that I would let him run Simon when Betty was hitched on behind,” Joey said quickly, and his mother replied :

“I’m not blamin’ you, Joey, for that boy is terribly tryin’, but I wish it hadn’t happened,” and Aunt Jane looked worried.

Before she could say anything more, however, Zenas came up with no little show of excitement, as he said hurriedly :

“If the mother of that ’ere city boy is anywhere ’round, she’d better get down to the hotel before he makes a bigger fool of himself than he did with Colonel Hartley’s hoss.”

“His mother is down near the main hall ; she was too tired to walk around the dusty grounds. What is Rupert doin’, Zenas ?” and the lines of anxiety on Aunt Jane’s face deepened.

“You might ask what he ain’t doin’, and I’d have a better chance to answer the question,” Zenas replied with a grin. “He’s showin’ quite a lot of money, an’ cavortin’ ’round the stable yard

tellin' what he an' his father will do to Joey Crawford. Colonel Hartley said I'd better speak to you 'bout it, for he's fixin' up some kind of a game to do Betty a harm, an' has got cash enough to hire one or two of them Topsham toughs to help him."

"I'm sure I don't know how his mother would take it, if we should tell her," Aunt Jane said in perplexity. "She seems to think he never does anything out of the way, even when he's at his worst; but if Colonel Hartley sent word, it seems as if she ought to hear it."

"Of course she had," Sadie added decidedly. "I'll go with Zenas to find her, and we'll let him repeat just what the landlord of the hotel said."

Because Aunt Jane made no protest against the plan, Sadie dragged the unwilling Zenas along with her, he all the while declaring that he "hadn't got the nerve to tell that city woman what a fool her boy was makin' of himself."

"Now don't you go to worryin' 'bout what he may do," Joey said to his mother when they were comparatively alone. "I can take care of Betty, an' myself too."

"But there's no good reason why you should be obliged to defend yourself, especially against your own cousin. How I wish your father was

here! Joey! I've just thought of what shall be done. Your aunt would be willin' to go home this very minute, for she doesn't enjoy fairs; we'll leave here early enough for Zenas to do the chores an' come back with Simon. He can stay all night with you, an' start for the farm just before daylight, so no one will know anything about it."

Joey would have much preferred that the program as set down by his father be carried out; but at the same time he felt relieved at knowing Zenas would be with him during such time as the mischief might be attempted, if indeed anything of the kind was really contemplated by Rupert.

Then Sadie came back, and alone.

"Aunt Marie wanted Zenas to go with her to the hotel; but she doesn't believe Rupert has been doing anything out of the way. She says we people down here don't understand boys of spirit who have always lived in the city."

"Neither do we want to," Aunt Jane said emphatically, and then she closed her lips very tightly, as if regretting that she had spoken so sharply.

The Crawford family had but little time in which to converse privately, for there were so many who knew Aunt Jane, and insisted on

speaking with her, that soon Betty's pen was surrounded by a laughing, chattering throng, nearly all of whom won a place in Joey's heart by bestowing praise upon the calf.

A full hour passed before Zenas came back, and Joey, eager to learn what Rupert's mother had done, led the man into the shed in the rear of the cattle pens.

"Well, what did you see or hear?" the lad asked excitedly, and Zenas replied drawlingly :

"A heap, 'cordin' to my idees ; your aunt the same as said right up an' down that I'd been tellin' lies 'bout that idjut of her'n. He was out by the stables with four or five of the toughest boys in Topsham, all hands of 'em puffin' away at cigarettes of his buyin', I reckon, an' she seemed to think it was the right thing. The two of 'em had a talk, an' then she told me to let your mother know she'd decided to stay at the hotel till the family was ready to go home, 'cause it was so hot an' dusty over here."

"Do you believe Rupert would dare try to make any trouble for me?" Joey asked anxiously, and Zenas replied gravely :

"If he's got money enough to keep the gang with him till dark, an' his mother don't take him home, there's no knowin' what he might do in

the way of showin' off his city 'spirits.' 'Cordin' to my idee, Joey, it can't do any harm to keep your eyes open wide to-night. There won't be much danger after to-morrow mornin', 'less his mother gives him more money, 'cause these Topsham toughs are only hangin' 'round for what they can get out of him."

At this point Sadie joined her brother and Zenas, and she said, after hearing the man's report :

"We'll be ready to go home at two o'clock, Zenas, and you're to be here at that time."

"What? Ain't you goin' to wait for the hoss racin'?" Zenas cried in surprise.

It seemed necessary Sadie should explain the plan as formed by her mother, and instead of laughing at the precaution, as Joey supposed he would, Zenas approved of it fully.

"It's a good idee," he said emphatically, "an' I'll do better than hangin' 'round here waitin' for you. I'll have the team outside the gate sharp at two o'clock, an' you meet me there. We can be home a leetle past three, an' I'll get one of the Harkins boys to do the milkin', which will give me time to drive back here with Simon before the show is over for the day. I'll take good care that your city cousin don't know I've got back,

an' if he tries any monkey shines, his city 'spirits' will be took down a bit."

Then Zenas hurried away to see what he might of the exhibits before it was time to start for home, and, because of their many friends, Joey did not have an opportunity of speaking with his mother and sister again until they came up to say they were ready to return to Hillside farm.

"It's just possible your Aunt Marie may take Rupert home with her, an' if she does there'll be no need of Zenas's comin' back," Aunt Jane said as she kissed Joey. "I hate to leave you, son, thinkin' somethin' may happen; but it surely does seem as if Zenas could do a power towards checkin' your cousin."

"He won't try to do anything to me, mother," Joey said confidently. "It's Betty he'll aim for, but I reckon, the way you've fixed things, he won't come out so very far ahead."

"I shall expect to see the blue ribbon on Betty's neck to-morrow," Sadie whispered, and then she and her mother were lost to view in the restless throng which literally choked every passage-way and road on the spacious grounds.

An hour later, when Joey was saying to himself that his mother and sister were probably very near Hillside farm, and while he was wondering

if his aunt had taken her son with her, the lad was startled by hearing a familiar voice cry sneeringly :

“That’s the prig who hangs around the farm praying, as if he was too good to live, and there’s the calf he thinks is so wonderful. Look at him sharp, so there won’t be any mistake when we come this way again.”

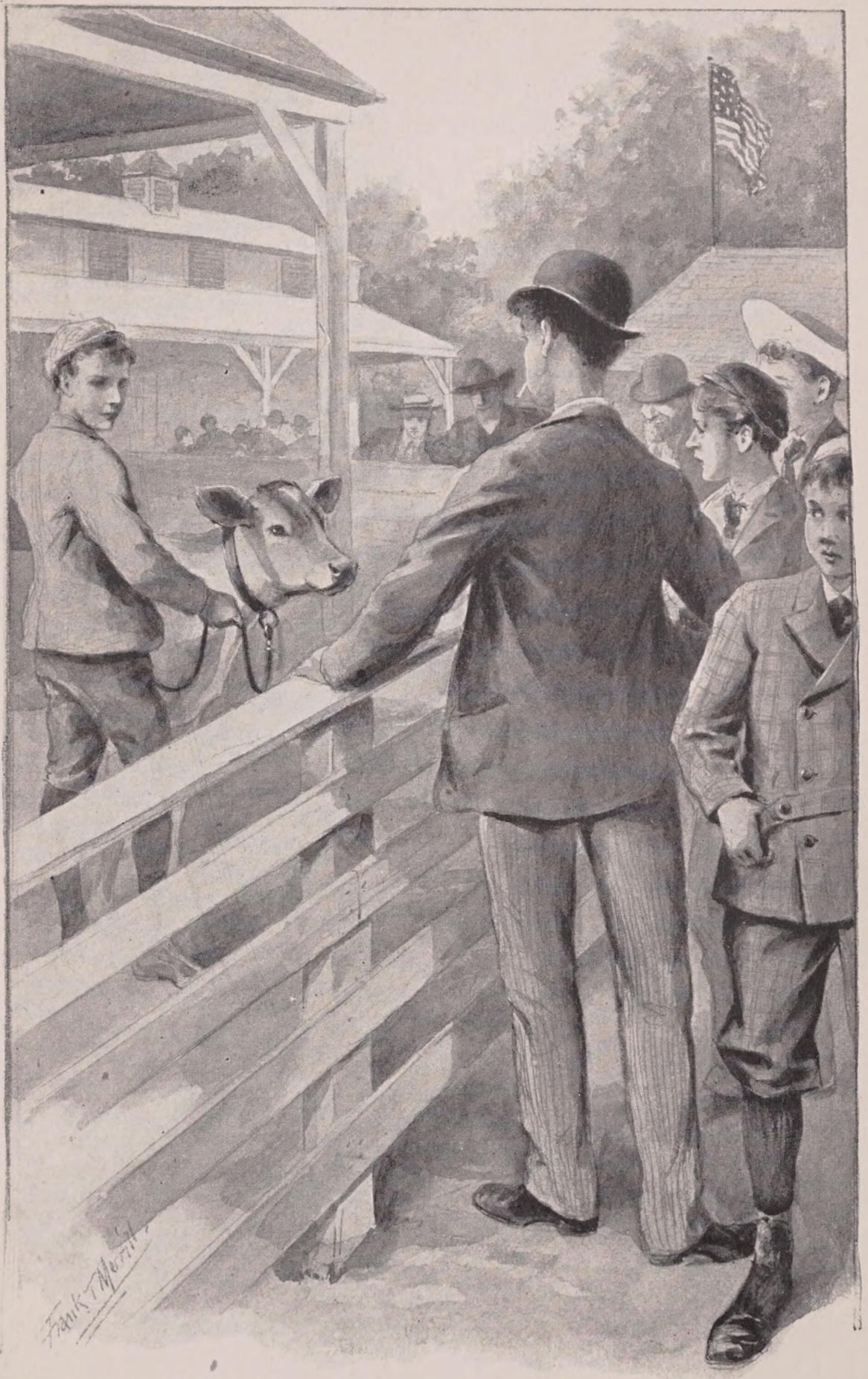
It was Rupert who spoke, and the words sounded like a direct menace.

Joey looked up quickly, saw his cousin in company with three or four boys considerably older than himself, and all the party, except Rupert, stared at him as if obeying the command ; but no one ventured to speak.

“His mother didn’t take him home with her, an’ he’ll make trouble for me if he can,” Joey muttered to himself ; “but I don’t believe those Topsham fellows will dare go very far on the road to mischief.”

From that moment, however, Joey stood close beside Betty, watching the passers-by keenly, lest some one should make an open attack on the calf, until the throngs dispersed gradually as night approached.

It was nearly five o’clock, the time set for the balloon ascension, and but few people were in the



JOEY LOOKED UP QUICKLY.

vicinity of the cattle pens, when Joey heard a cautious whisper from the shed in the rear :

“ There’s no reason why you shouldn’t shut up shop, Joey. You won’t see any more visitors ’round this way to-night, an’ there’s considerable to be done, if you agree to what I’ve been hatchin’ up while old Simon was slidin’ along over the road as if he couldn’t put one foot in front of the other.”

An exclamation of surprise and delight escaped Joey’s lips as he understood that Zenas had returned thus early, and, apparently, so secretly.

The cattle pens were so constructed that the front, which remained open during the day, could be entirely closed at night, thus forming a stall such as would shelter the animals from the weather.

Without waiting to ask Zenas why he proposed that the pens be closed thus early, Joey put in place the shutters which served as doors, and in a very short time not only Betty, but the oxen, were screened from view.

Then Joey went to the rear shed, and, much to his surprise, found that Zenas had brought Simon on the grounds.

“ What are you countin’ on doin’ with the horse ? ” he asked in surprise. “ We haven’t any

room for him here, unless he's put in this shed where we're supposed to sleep."

"If I'd left him at the hotel it would a' been the same as tellin' that city cousin of yours that I was here. Besides, seein' that he ain't worth sich a terrible sight of money, we can afford to take some chances with him."

"What do you mean?" Joey asked, impatiently.

"I was thinkin' that we'd put him in Betty's pen an' take her inter the shed with us, if it can be done without anybody's knowin' it, an' then we won't have to keep such a sharp watch."

By this time Joey began to have an inkling of Zenas's plan, and, running back to the pen, he made certain there was no one in the vicinity whom he knew, after which he led Betty quickly into the shed, while at the same moment Zenas took Simon to the pen.

It was not necessary to do anything more, save give the animals water, and Zenas remained in the shed with the calf, where no one could see him.

By the time Joey had come to an end of his work the fair was closed for the day, and all save those whose duty it was to remain on the grounds during the night, were supposed to have gone away.

“Did Aunt Mary try to have Roop go with her?” Joey asked when he was in the shed ready for supper.

“He wasn’t anywhere to be seen when we got there, an’ she acted as if it was too much work to talk. The way I figgered it out was that she felt a good bit disgruntled because I told her about him, an’ your mother an’ Sadie had to do all the talkin’ while we were drivin’ home. I put the horse along at a smart clip till we were at the farm; then ran over to Harkins’s, got one of the boys to do the chores, an’ started up the back road. Never met a soul on the way, an’ came in while all hands were taken up with the hoss racin’, so we can reckon that nobody knows I’m here.”

Then Joey told him of what Rupert had said, and Zenas replied thoughtfully, as he helped himself bountifully to the food Aunt Jane had provided :

“It wouldn’t surprise me a little bit if your city cousin tried to make trouble, for he must have fixed it with the Topsham toughs, else why did he bring ’em over here? It’s a sure thing they won’t begin their funny business till everybody has settled down for the night, so you may as well get what sleep you can.”

“What about yourself?”

“I’m countin’ on startin’ for Hillside farm as soon as day breaks, and Simon will let me sleep all the way, ’cause he ain’t given to cuttin’ capers.”

Joey felt positive he could not close his eyes in slumber; but he stretched himself out on the bundles of sweet straw, and had hardly more than done so when he fell asleep.

Betty nibbled at the hay contentedly, as if she had always been accustomed to spending the night with her master, and Zenas remained on watch till nearly twelve o’clock, when he heard that which caused him to awaken Joey.

“I reckon your cousin is gettin’ ready to show some of that spirit his mother tells about, and it’s time for you to be stirrin’.”

Joey was on his feet in an instant, and even as he arose it was possible to hear the sound of footsteps near at hand, as if two or three persons were creeping around the rear of the cattle pens.

Zenas, taking his companion by the hand, led him to that part of the shed where a crack between the boards had been whittled away until one could get a good view of the outside, whispering as he did so :

“I had the idea that it wouldn't do any harm if I fixed things so's we could look out, an' now's the time when such a place is needed.”

Peering through the aperture, Joey soon distinguished the forms of four persons, one of whom he felt positive was his cousin, when he heard him say :

“That's the shed, I tell you ; the oxen are in the other. Sneak in there and get the calf.”

“Why don't you do it yourself?” one of the party asked fretfully.

“Because I don't know anything about handling cows, and you agreed to do it for a dollar. Here's the money, and you shall have it the minute the calf is outside.”

In his heart Joey thanked Zenas just then for having conceived the plan of putting old Simon in Betty's place, for even if the mischief-makers turned him loose, he would not stray very far away.

Just as one of the intruders approached the shutter-like door of the pen to open it, a match was lighted, and as Rupert held his cigarette to the flame, Joey could see him and two of the others quite plainly.

Then the match was dropped, and an instant later old Simon was led out, for in the darkness

of the pen it would have been difficult to distinguish a horse from Betty.

“ You’ve got that old scarecrow of a horse ! ” Rupert cried angrily, and as he spoke a bright flame sprang up as if from the ground, for the lighted match had fallen among straw.

“ Get out of here quick ! ” one of the strangers cried as he took to his heels, and by the time Joey and Zenas could leap from the shed to fight the fire, the last mischief-maker, who chanced to be Rupert, was running toward the main gate at full speed.

“ Fire ! Fire ! Help ! Help ! ” Zenas cried at the full strength of his lungs. “ Stop those villains ! Stop ’em ! ”

“ Don’t yell so loud ; we can put it out ! ” Joey cried as he stamped on the burning straw, and Zenas replied grimly :

“ I ain’t afraid we can’t ; but there are bound to be watchmen around, an’ it won’t do any harm to let ’em know what’s goin’ on. ”

Joey failed to understand fully what Zenas meant, and the shouts and exclamations which could soon be heard in the distance did not enlighten him until later, when it was all made plain.

The task of extinguishing the flames did not

prove to be as easy as Betty's owner had believed, for they spread in every direction on the dry ground, which was covered with bits of paper, hay and other inflammable material, and before five minutes had passed Joey was crying for help quite as loudly as Zenas had done.

Fortunately there were a score or more of men sleeping nearby in charge of the cattle and horses, and after they had been awakened a plentiful supply of water was speedily brought. No real damage had been done; but there was little question that, if Zenas had not been on watch, a disastrous conflagration must have ensued, for within five minutes the flames would have fastened on the wooden structures, when such a fire department as Topsham possessed could not have made successful fight against them.

"It was a close shave," some one of the men who had been working said, when the danger had passed. "Whoever saw it first must have had his eyes open all night, else he ate too much for dinner an' was out takin' a walk with his despepsy."

At this point Zenas would have told that he and Joey were really entitled to praise for having given a timely alarm, but Master Crawford pinched his arm so sharply that the words had no

opportunity of escaping his lips, owing to the cry of pain which was forced from him.

“Don’t say anything about it,” Joey whispered. “Of course Rupert is the one to blame; but father wouldn’t like it if we made trouble for him when there was no good reason.”

Finally the men who had aided in extinguishing the flames went to their several sleeping places, and the representatives from Hillside farm were at liberty to look after their property.

Old Simon had walked quietly back into the pen when the blaze first sprang up, and was munching the hay which had been provided for Betty, as if knowing full well that it was a better quality than he was usually served with. The oxen were chewing their cuds contentedly, and the calf was lying down, when Joey made the rounds of the buildings to assure himself that all was well with the animals under his care.

“There’s little chance that precious cousin of yours will try to work any more mischief this night,” Zenas said when it was seen that no harm had been done. “’Cordin’ to my idee I’d better pull out for Hillside farm, seein’s there’s no more need of me here. I can get a good many winks between now an’ time to milk.”

Joey knew that Zenas would be wise to start at

once, instead of waiting until the time he had set for the journey, and, therefore, made no protest; but said earnestly as he helped harness Simon:

“I hope you won’t say anything about the fire where Aunt Marie can hear you, for she might guess that Rupert was mixed up in the mischief.”

“She wouldn’t believe that agin him if she’d even seen the little rascal drop the match,” Zenas replied with a laugh, and then he drove slowly away, leaving Joey feeling really homesick.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLUE RIBBON.

JOEY went into the shed with Betty, and barricaded the door by rolling two bales of hay against it, for although he believed, as did Zenas, that there was no probability Rupert and his precious acquaintances would make a second attempt at mischief that night, it seemed necessary he should protect himself against intrusion.

Then he laid down on the straw, thinking it might be possible to sleep ; but his eyes had never been open wider than at that moment. He reviewed all that Rupert had said or done since coming to Hillside farm, and this, quite naturally, had the effect of making him very bitter toward his cousin. He wondered what would have been the result if Betty had been led out, with three or four reckless boys to frighten her, and realized that if the lad from the city had succeeded in his designs, the calf must have lost all chance of winning the blue ribbon, even if she had not been ruined.

If Rupert had carried out his plan fully, he could not have benefited himself in the slightest degree ; there would have been no sport in simply setting Betty free, and nothing save injury to the calf and a grievous disappointment to Deacon Crawford's entire family, could have resulted. Therefore did the intended wrong seem all the more malicious.

With such thoughts in his mind Joey could not sleep, and when the second day of the fair dawned, he was as wide awake as at the moment when Zenas went away.

It was really a relief to be able to work, and he set about caring for the cattle, after leading Betty into her pen, with a firm resolve to dismiss all thoughts of Rupert, giving his undivided attention to exhibiting the live stock from Hillside farm.

He groomed the oxen first, taking due care to spend as much time on their toilets as on Betty's, and but few visitors had arrived when Sadie suddenly appeared before him.

"Why are you here so early?" he cried in surprise. "The gates can't be hardly more than opened. Where is mother?"

"She isn't coming to-day. When we got home last night Aunt Marie said right up and down

that she wouldn't come to-day, because she had such a headache, and of course mother couldn't leave her alone."

"I don't know why she couldn't," Joey cried sharply, ceasing his labor of rubbing Betty's soft coat to make it shine. "If Aunt Marie don't like the fair, that's no reason why mother, who doesn't have a chance to go away like this more than once a year, should hang around home with her!"

"It wouldn't do, Joey, to leave father's only sister alone, and I really don't think mother cared much about coming to-day. She says she will surely be here to-morrow, whether Aunt Marie stays at home or not. When Zenas found out that I was the only one coming, he insisted on starting as early as possible, and, once on the road, drove faster than would have pleased father, I'm afraid. What happened last night? I know by the way Zenas acted that something went wrong; but he wouldn't open his mouth about it."

Joey could do no less than tell his sister the whole story, more particularly since she had already noticed traces of the fire, and by the time he had concluded the recital Sadie was as angry as she well could be.

"He's a regular villain, that's——"

“I wouldn’t say another word, Sadie ; I felt last night as you do, but I’ve kind’er got over it. There was no great harm done, an’ it ain’t very likely he’ll try to do anything more. Of course he won’t have the nerve to stay much longer at Hillside farm, after I tell him that he was seen by both of us, an’ then we’ll be alone by ourselves once more. Where is Zenas ?”

“He stopped at the hotel to stable the horse ; but he should be along very soon. Is there anything you want done ?”

“No ; I only thought that it would be a good idea to have him stay with me till we found out what Rupert was doin’.”

“I’m counting on spending this day with you and Betty, and surely I can keep as sharp a watch as Zenas. He ought to have a chance to see something of the fair, and if we look after the cattle till night, he’ll be willing to attend to them to-morrow, so that you and I can go around together.”

Sadie had hardly more than made this explanation when Zenas appeared, looking so grave that Joey, made timid by the events of the previous night, asked falteringly :

“What’s the matter now, Zenas ? Is Rupert cuttin’ up any more shines ?”

“He’s where he won’t make any trouble for Betty, unless the deacon gets back mighty soon an’ does what he can to get him out’er the scrape.”

“What do you mean?” Sadie asked impatiently. “Please don’t keep on being mysterious, as you have been ever since we left home.”

“I reckon there ain’t any great amount of mystery ’bout this,” Zenas replied. “Do you remember, Joey, we heard a lot of shoutin’ last night that sounded as if it came from the main gates, just after the villains ran away?”

“Yes ; what about it?”

“Wa’al, the watchmen caught that precious cousin of yours, an’ one of the gang that was with him. They are down in the jail now, an’ in mighty hard sleddin’, as near as I can make out.”

“In jail!” Sadie cried, her cheeks paling. “Oh, Joey, can’t we do something to help him? It was terrible wicked of him to think of hurting Betty ; but you know he didn’t mean to set the pens on fire!”

“That much is certain, for I saw him drop the match after lightin’ the cigarette, an’ am sure he wasn’t countin’ on doin’ any more than fix it so’s Betty couldn’t take the prize.”

“But what can we do? Oh, what can we do?” Sadie cried as the tears overflowed her eyelids. “It’s so dreadful to think of him in jail!”

“You can’t do anything yet a while,” Zenas interrupted. “Once he’s arrested, it’s a case of havin’ some kind of a trial before he can be set free.”

“We might telegraph for father to come home at once,” Sadie suggested. “The people of Tops-ham will believe what father says, and surely he could get Rupert out of jail!”

“I’d ’a done that same thing without waitin’ to hear whether you wanted me to or not,” Zenas said quickly; “but the trouble is that you don’t know where your father is stoppin’ in the city, an’ we’d have to find out that much before you could send any kind of a message.”

“Aunt Marie would know,” Sadie said after a pause. “Perhaps you ought to drive right back and tell her what has happened.”

“Why wouldn’t it be a good idee for Joey to go down to the jail first? Your cousin sent word to Colonel Hartley early this mornin’, askin’ him to tell Joey what had happened.”

“But what can I do for him?” Joey asked helplessly.

“That’s what I don’t know; but he wants to

see you, an' the question is whether you're willin' to go?" Zenas said gravely.

"Why shouldn't I be willin'?" Joey asked in surprise.

"Wa'al, if I owned Betty, an' any city chap had been floatin' 'round Topsham all one day tryin' to get somebody help him do her a mischief, I ain't certain as I'd raise a hand to help him, even if he was goin' to be hanged."

"But Joey *couldn't* refuse to help Rupert now that he's in such terrible trouble," Sadie cried sharply. "Even if he had carried Betty away last night, we would be bound to do what we could for him!"

"Yes, I s'pose that's the way your father would look at things; but I'm built different. Howsomever, if Joey's goin' to see whether he can help the fellow that's tried to do him harm, it's time he started. I'll stop here to look after the cattle—"

"An' I'll stay with you," Sadie said decidedly. "Joey will feel better if he knows that two of us are watching. Now go at once," she added, turning toward her brother, "and perhaps he'll know how to telegraph for Uncle John to send father home as soon as possible."

It was a mournful errand, and while Joey

would have felt well pleased had it been possible to avoid it, there was no question in his mind but that he was in duty bound to do whatsoever lay in his power to aid Rupert.

Half an hour later he stood at the door of the county jail, and when his ring at the bell was answered by a blue-coated official, he asked timidly if Rupert Stockbridge was there.

“Are you Deacon Jonas Crawford’s son?” the officer asked, and Joey replied in the affirmative.

“The Stockbridge boy says you’re his cousin.”

“So I am, sir.”

“Do you know what he did on the fair grounds last night?”

Joey hesitated; he was afraid he might say something which would plunge Rupert into greater trouble, and yet there was no thought in his mind of telling other than the absolute truth in case it became necessary. Finally he said in a tremulous tone:

“If you please, sir, I’d rather not say anything about it till father gets back. We’ll try to telegraph him to-day, an’ when he comes I’ll know just what I ought’er do.”

“Well, you may come in, for I’ve got no real right to make you talk unless you’re willing; but the story is that your cousin tried to do you

an injury last night, yet you're the only person he has asked to see."

Joey entered the gloomy-looking building, and as he was being conducted along the iron corridor, seeing on every hand evidences of the result of evil doing, it seemed to him that one had better be dead than rightfully confined in such a place.

Then the officer unlocked a cell door, motioned for Joey to enter, and said as he locked the door upon him :

"Pound on the grating when you are ready to come out, and don't get impatient if I'm a little slow in answering, for the biggest part of our force is at the fair to-day."

Rupert was lying on the bed, his face buried in the blanket which served as a pillow, and not until the turnkey had gone away did he look up.

"Why didn't you come before?" he asked, showing to Joey a swollen, tear-stained face.

"I didn't know you were here till Zenas brought word from Colonel Hartley that you wanted to see me, an' then I came as quickly as possible."

"I'm nearly dead, and when father comes back he'll make these people sorry for treating me in this way," Rupert cried, showing more of anger than repentance.

"What do you want me to do?" Joey asked,

not knowing what reply to make to his cousin's threats.

“Help me to get out of here, can't you?”

“Zenas said that nobody could help you out until you'd had a trial. If I knew how to send a telegram to father, I'd ask him to come straight away. Do you s'pose he's stoppin' at your home?”

“No ; our house is shut up, and I heard father tell mother that he and Uncle Jonas would go to a hotel, but he didn't say which one. Do you think I'm going to stay here till your father gets ready to come back?” Rupert demanded fiercely, as if believing it was in his cousin's power to set him free.

“I don't see what else you can do. Zenas said you was reg'larly arrested, an' there's nothin' you or I can do to fix it. Shall I send for your mother?”

“I don't care what you do ! You've got me into this scrape, and if you don't get me out of here before night, I'll make things hot for somebody.”

“How did I get you into the scrape?” Joey asked sharply, for he was not disposed to be patient with the lad while he was in such a defiant mood.

“You wouldn’t let me stay with you on the fair grounds, and I got in with a lot of fellows who were trying to make mischief.”

“Now see here, Rupert, I don’t want you to begin by whinin’ ’round ’bout my not lettin’ you stay with me, same’s you did when you stove up Colonel Hartley’s team. Sadie an’ your mother both know that you wouldn’t come with me, but marched off to the hotel, mad because I wouldn’t let you run Simon while Betty was fastened to the wagon. Stand up like a man, even if you are in trouble, an’ tell the truth about it. It won’t help a little bit for you to try to throw the blame on somebody else.”

“There ain’t any blame!” Rupert cried angrily. “I wasn’t doing a thing, except walking along minding my own business, when those miserable officers caught me.”

“I came down here to help you if I could, because you’re my cousin, an’ I’ll do everything I can, if you act decently. But don’t say that you hadn’t done anything, or that you were walkin’ along peaceably when the officer arrested you. Zenas an’ I saw you an’ the Topsham toughs when you came up near Betty’s pen. You was to give one of them a dollar if he’d lead the calf out, an’ while talkin’ you lighted a cigarette, throwin’ the

match on the ground. Then the fire started, an' you ran away ; I reckon the officers got hold of you inside the gates. If they take you to court for settin' a fire, it won't help you because your father's a rich man. I'm in hopes no one saw what you did, except Zenas an' me, although everybody must believe one of you fellows started the fire, else why were you runnin' away, or what business did you have on the fair grounds at that time of night ?”

Joey spoke gravely, with no note of anger in his tones, and Rupert looked up at him in surprise not unmixed with fear.

“Did you hear what I said ?” he asked in a whisper.

“Zenas an' I heard all the talk while you were near the pen, an' when you lighted the match we saw your faces plainly. Besides that, those fellows told around the hotel that you was tryin' to get 'em to help do somethin' to Betty.”

In a twinkling Rupert's anger gave way to most abject fear ; until that moment he had not supposed any one knew of the part he had played, and he was terrified. He understood the position in which he had voluntarily placed himself in order to punish his cousin for a wrong that had never been committed, and

on the instant he was plunged into a frenzy of alarm.

“You won’t tell what you know, Joey, you won’t? You couldn’t see me stay in such a horrible place as this, and if you don’t tell, no one else will know anything about it,” he cried, falling on his knees in front of his cousin, and a most painful half-hour did Joey spend.

It was a long time before he could calm Rupert, and then he tried to convince the lad that the only way out of the trouble was by telling the truth. He refused to say that he would not tell what he knew, fearing lest he might be forced to do so; but agreed not to speak with any save the members of his own family, and Zenas, until his father returned, and advised Rupert to consent that his mother be summoned.

A difficult task did Joey have to make the terrified boy listen to reason; but, finally, he grew more calm, and it was agreed that Mrs. Stockbridge should be kept in ignorance of what had occurred, at least twenty-four hours longer, when, if nothing had been heard either from Deacon Crawford or Mr. Stockbridge, the shameful story should be told at Hillside farm.

“I’ll come and see you to-night, if they’ll let me,” Joey said as he began pounding on the

grating, heeding not Rupert's pleadings that he remain.

"I *can't* stay here alone!" he wailed, and Joey said firmly:

"There's nothing else you can do, an' I mustn't stop any longer, because Sadie is waitin' for me."

"It won't do any harm if you stop a little while longer," Rupert begged, and, fortunately for Joey, the turnkey came up just then.

Five minutes later he was in the street, his heart so full of sorrow that he had entirely forgotten his hopes concerning Betty, although knowing full well the awards would be made that forenoon.

He was walking slowly back to the fair grounds, with more of grief in his heart than he had ever known before, when he heard Sadie's voice, and, looking up, saw his sister coming toward him rapidly, her face as radiant with joy as his was gloomy with sadness.

"Oh, Joey! Why don't you walk faster? Betty has got the blue ribbon, and the prize animals are to be paraded right away. You *must* be there to lead her!"

"Then she got the award!" Joey cried, the sorrow because of Rupert's trouble giving way before the flood of happiness which swept over

him. "I knew we'd need only to let the people see her! What about the oxen?"

"They've got the second prize, and Zenas will drive them around. *Do* hurry, for it would take away half my pleasure if you didn't show Betty on the track with the others!"

Joey quickened his pace, and then slackened it as he said:

"I saw Rupert, an' it was hard work to get away——"

"I don't want to hear about him now," Sadie cried quickly. "Let's have all the pleasure we can out of Betty's good fortune, and then we'll talk about him."

There was no resisting Sadie when her heart was set on anything, so her father always said, and soon Joey was running at full speed, leaving her behind, as she begged him to do, that there might be no question as to his taking part in the triumphal procession.

Betty was given a place directly behind the horses, when the animals which had won the blue ribbon were marshalled in line, and one would really have believed she understood that she was being honored, for never before had Sadie seen her hold her head so high, or step so daintily.

"That's what you may call a handsome

heifer !” Joey heard more than one say, as he marched by Betty’s side holding the halter, although there seemed little need of such precaution, for the pretty creature acted as if she knew and intended to keep her place in the line, and for the moment the boy almost forgot his cousin.

Then, when the procession was passing the grand stand, greeted by the most generous applause from the spectators, Joey uttered a cry of glad surprise, for there, with a valise in his hand as if he had just come from the train, stood his father.

“ Good for you, Joey !” the deacon shouted, as he waved his hat boyishly. “ Good for you an’ Betty !”

Had it been possible to make his father understand what he said, Joey would have asked him to come to the cattle-pens as soon as the parade was over ; but he could not have made himself heard amid all that tumult.

When, however, the procession had passed and repassed the grand stand, and Joey had led Betty into her pen, he found his father awaiting him, and would have told the shameful story at once, but that the deacon interrupted him by saying :

“ I’ve already heard a good part of it, Joey, an’ can come near guessin’ what you may have to

tell ; but I don't want to hear it—that is, not until later. We'll send Zenas back for your mother an' Aunt Marie, an' it's possible we can help the foolish boy, if he leaves town at once. It don't stand to reason that you an' Sadie have had any too much enjoyment out of this fair—so leave Betty in the pen—she'll be safe enough now, an' go around with your sister till I come back.”

All the care was lifted from Joey's heart now that his father was at home again, and from that time, until nearly dark, he and his sister wandered around the grounds, gazing at the many strange and beautiful things to be seen.

Then the deacon, looking very grave, came for them.

“The carriage is at the gate, chickens, an' we'll all go home for the night. Zenas will stay here to look after the cattle, an' we'll come back for them to-morrow.”

“What about Rupert ?” Joey asked.

“He has gone back to the city with his mother, to whom he told all the truth, as nearly as I can judge. We'll send your Aunt Marie's baggage on the mornin' train ; she didn't want to show herself 'round here any more than could be helped, an' I can't say that I blamed her.”

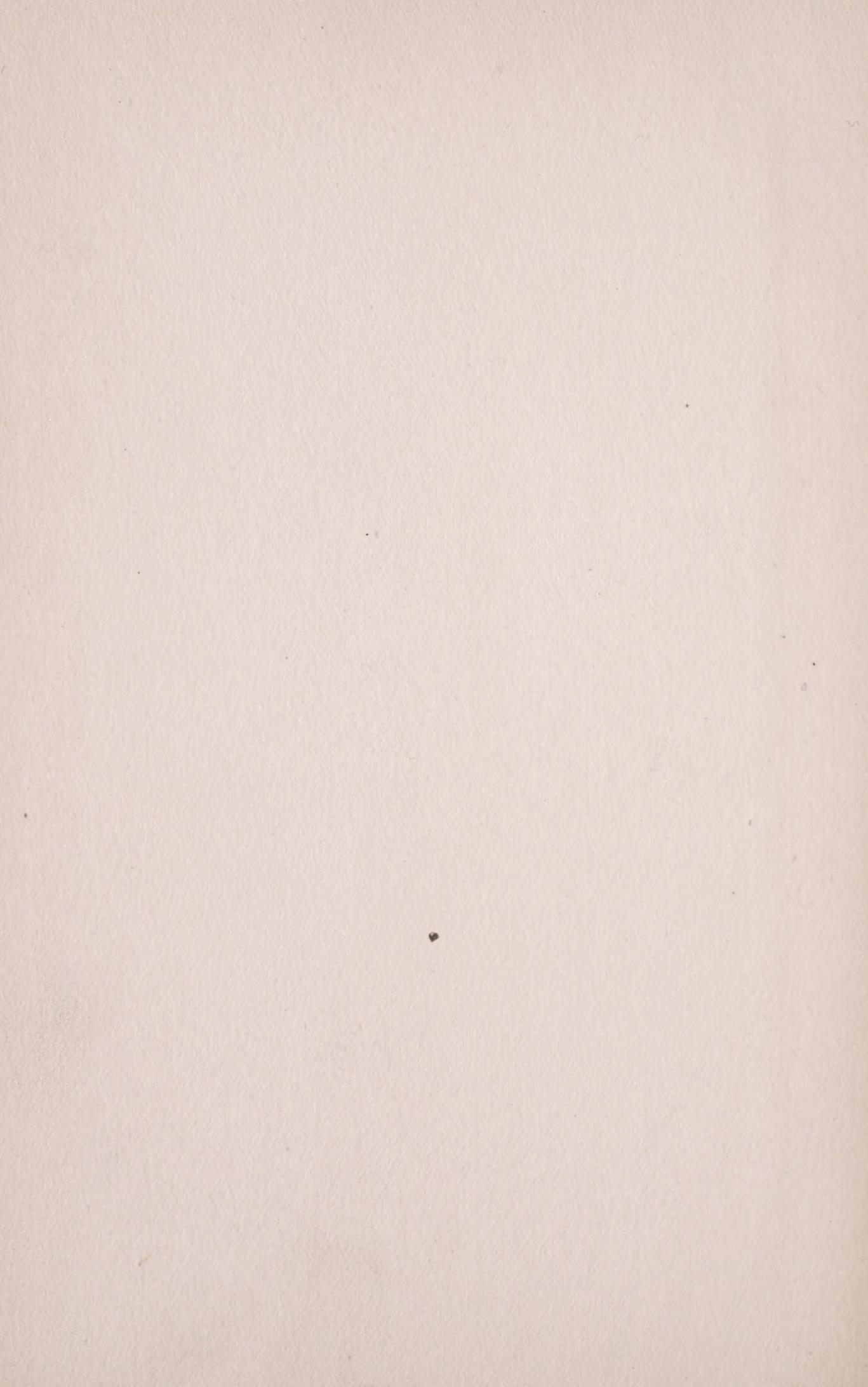
That evening, when the Crawford family were

seated on the broad stone step in front of the kitchen door, happy at being together once more, the deacon said, speaking to no one in particular, as he rubbed his cheek against Sadie's, and laid his hand on Joey's head :

“ If I was given to twistin' Scripture texts, I'd have one of 'em read, ‘ Good children maketh glad parents, ’ an', my chickens, your father and mother understand this night, if they never did before, how much God has blessed 'em in their home ! ”

THE END.

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