

TWO
WILD CHERRIES

In The Country



HOWARD R. GARIS



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TWO WILD CHERRIES SERIES
By HOWARD R. GARIS

TWO WILD CHERRIES

Or, How Dick and Janet Lost Something

TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE COUNTRY

Or, How Dick and Janet Saved the Mill

TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE WOODS

Or, How Dick and Janet Caught the Bear

TWO WILD CHERRIES AT THE SEASHORE

Or, How Dick and Janet Were Shipwrecked



“Oh ! Oh, what has happened ?” she cried.

**TWO
WILD CHERRIES
IN THE COUNTRY**

OR

**HOW DICK AND JANET
SAVED THE MILL**

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

Author of "Rick and Ruddy," "Rick and Ruddy Out
West," "Two Wild Cherries," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN M. FOSTER

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TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE COUNTRY



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TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

A NOISE IN THE ATTIC

“How lovely and quiet it is in the house now, Jane,” said Mrs. Cherry, as she threaded the needle for another long hem in the sheet on which she was sewing.

“Yes’m,” answered Jane, the maid and cook of the Cherry household. “And with the children not at school, too. It doesn’t seem possible they could be so quiet.”

“They’re up in the attic reading,” went on Mrs. Cherry with a smile. “Dick took his book about Robinson Crusoe, and Janet has her fairy stories. It’s the best thing to do when it rains—give the children books and let them read in the attic.”

“Oh, yes’m,” murmured Jane. “Shall I put the meat in to roast now?”

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“I think so. Mr. Cherry will come home from the store early on account of the rain, very likely. But I do hope the children are all right, Jane.”

“Why shouldn’t they be all right?” asked the cook, turning back as she was about to leave the room.

“Why, they’re so quiet,” Mrs. Cherry answered.

“Oh, yes’m, they are quiet—more quiet than I’ve known ’em to be ever before when they had to stay in on a rainy day. But they’re getting older—they’re not as wild as they used to be.”

“I hope so, Jane. Oh, Jane, listen—”

“Yes’m,” and the cook came into the room again.

“When you have put the meat in to roast,” went on Mrs. Cherry in a low voice, as if she did not want to disturb the hush that had fallen over the house, “when you have the roast in the oven, just slip quietly up to the attic, and see what Dick and Janet are doing.”

“Yes’m, I will.”

“And don’t let them see or hear you.”

“No’m, I won’t.”

“Because they may be all right—sitting quietly and reading.”

“Yes’m,” answered Jane with a little smile.

“And then—again,” went on Mrs. Cherry slowly, “they may be—into some kind of mischief.”

“Yes’m,” remarked the cook, as she went out. “They may be.”

And if you knew the two Wild Cherries as well as their mother did, and Jane did, and as well as I do, you would, I am sure, say that, very likely, Dick and Janet were up to some sort of mischief.

But the house was quiet—Oh, so very quiet!

The quiet did not last very long, however. First came the slam of the oven door as Jane closed it, having put in the beef to roast. Then Mrs. Cherry dropped her scissors which fell with a jingling rattle to the floor.

“Oh, Jane!” softly called her mistress.

“Yes’m, Mrs. Cherry!”

“I have to get up, for I dropped my scissors, so I’ll go to the attic and see what Dick and Janet are doing. You didn’t hear anything from them, did you?”

“Not a sound, no’m!”

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"It's rather strange. I never knew them to be so quiet for such a long time before. I'll just tiptoe up there and see what is going on."

"Yes'm," dutifully answered Jane.

She went on with her kitchen work. Mrs. Cherry laid aside her sewing and started up stairs. The rain was coming down harder than ever, pelting on the roof, drumming softly on the shingles, and pattering harder on the tin. It ran down the leader spouts with musical gurgles, as if laughing because so many children had to stay in. The rain dashed against the windows, and one drop chased another down the glass, in a race to see which would be first to reach the bottom sill.

"It's a bad storm," mused Mrs. Cherry as she looked out. "I'm glad our children have such a cozy, dry attic in which to play."

Up the stairs softly went the mother of the Cherries. Those of you who have read about Dick and Janet in the first book, called "Two Wild Cherries," know why the little boy and girl had this nickname. The others of you can guess, I imagine.

Suddenly, as Mrs. Cherry reached the foot

of the stairs, a great noise sounded in the attic. It was a sound as though something heavy had fallen. Then Janet's voice could be heard crying:

"Here now, you let me loose!"

"No, I'm not going to!"

"You got to let me loose, Dick Cherry, or I'll—"

"Look here now, Jan," pleaded her brother Dick, "didn't you say I could tie your feet with a rope and make you a captive?"

"Yes, I said that, but I didn't say you could pull me up to the roof by my feet and make me stay there!"

"But, Jan, I *got* to do that!" insisted Dick. "You're my captive! I'm a cannibal chief and if I don't hoist your feet offen the ground you may run away. I got to keep you a captive!"

There was another thumping sound—again as if something had fallen and Janet's voice screamed:

"Stop! Now you stop! If you don't I'm goin' to yell and call mother!"

"You're yellin' now," said Dick, coolly, while Mrs. Cherry, at the foot of the stairs listened.

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"Well, I can yell a lot louder than this!" declared Janet, and she proceeded to do so, screaming in shrill tones.

"Aw, stop it, will you!" begged her brother. "I'm not doin' anythin'." He was so excited that he was dropping the g letters from his words.

"You are so doin' somethin'!" declared Janet, following her brother's example about the endings of her words. "Ouch, now you let my feet down or I'll tell—"

There was a third loud thump.

"Those must have been Janet's feet," thought Mrs. Cherry. "I was almost sure the silence was too good to last. Children! Children, what are you doing?" she called up the attic stairs.

Her voice could not have been heard, however, for Janet was crying:

"Stop! Stop! Let me loose! Take that rope offen my legs!"

And Dick was mockingly answering:

"You're a captive! You're my captive! I'm a cannibal chief and I got to tie your feet up!"

"Dick! Janet! Stop that this instant!"

commanded Mrs. Cherry sternly, as she hurried up the stairs. "What will the neighbors think? Stop it at once!"

But the noise in the attic kept up—the screaming and thumping. No longer was the Cherry house quiet. Even the rain seemed to patter more loudly on the roof as if keeping time to the noise in the attic.

Up into the attic hurried the mother of the children. There she saw a strange sight. Lying on the floor was poor little Janet, her feet tied together by a rope. The rope was passed over a beam near the roof, and Dick had hold of the other end of the rope. By pulling on it he could raise his sister's bound feet off the attic floor.

This is what he had been doing. He would haul Janet's feet up a little way and then, when she screamed, he would let them fall suddenly.

It was this that made the thumping sounds.

"Dick! Whatever are you doing?" cried his mother.

"I'm playing cannibal chief and she's my captive!" the boy answered.

"But you shouldn't tie Janet up that way!"

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"She said I could, Mother. She wanted to be a captive!" pleaded Dick, looking hurt and disappointed.

"I said I'd be a captive—yes," admitted Janet, struggling to untangle her feet from the rope. "But I didn't say he could pull me up over a beam like he's doing—so there, Dick Cherry!"

"I got to keep the captive from running away," explained Dick, with a patient and resigned air.

"Well, you shouldn't do this, my dear, even if Janet said you could tie her feet," remarked Mrs. Cherry. "Now let her loose, please, and then play something more quiet. I was just saying to Jane how lovely and peaceful it was, when I came up and heard this terrible racket. What will the neighbors think?"

"I guess they didn't hear us on account of the rain," spoke Dick. "All right, I'll let you go," he said to his sister. "But the next time I play cannibal chief I won't ask you to be a captive! You're no good!"

"Dick! You mustn't talk so to your sister!" chided his mother.

"Well, I don't care!"



The glass fell to the floor of the attic with a clatter.

Dick sullenly gave the end of the rope a pull to bring it down from over the high beam where he had passed it by standing on a box. The rope came down with a snap.

Now, as it happened, there was an iron hook on the end of this rope—a hook Mr. Cherry had put there so that the rope could be fastened as a clothes line in the attic on rainy days. In the attic, just above where the children were playing, was a glass skylight.

As Dick twitched the rope, the hook on the end of it flew up and broke one of the panes of glass in the skylight.

The glass fell to the floor of the attic with a clatter.

“Oh, children! Be careful!” cried Mrs. Cherry.

Janet had scrambled out of the way just in time, for some of the jagged glass landed where she had been lying, a captive of the “cannibal chief.”

“Oh, look what you did, Dick Cherry!” cried his sister. “Look!”

Dick glanced quickly up at the broken skylight. Just then there was a sudden and heavier downpour of rain, and water from the

weeping skies splashed into the face of the little boy.

“Oh, get a tub, quick! A basin! Call Jane!” cried Mrs. Cherry. “The ceilings will be ruined if the rain leaks in! Oh, Dick, see what you have done!” she added in sorrowful tones. “Get a tub, or something, quickly!”

And then, in the midst of all the confusion and excitement, there sounded a loud ring at the front door bell.

CHAPTER II

BY SPECIAL DELIVERY

JANE came running up the stairs to the attic. The cook did not try to go up silently as Mrs. Cherry had done, to see what Dick and Janet were doing. They had been very quiet while Dick was tying up his sister's feet. But when he went to pull her over the beam—then Janet screamed.

"Has anything happened?" asked Jane. She had heard the noise of the attic down in her kitchen.

"Dick broke the skylight!" cried Janet, anxious to be the first to tell the bad news. "Dick broke the skylight!"

"Aw, I didn't mean to!" voiced her brother.

"And the rain's coming in like anything!" went on Janet.

By this time Jane had entered the attic and she could see the broken glass.

Of course she could not see Dick pulling

Janet by the rope around her feet for this cannibal chief play had stopped. But she did see the rain splashing in.

“Oh, Jane!” exclaimed Mrs. Cherry, “I wish you would get a tub, or a basin or something to catch the water! If it runs down through the floor it will spoil the ceilings.”

“Yes’m, I’ll get a big basin,” and Jane hurried down the stairs again.

Dick looked about the attic. There were many odds and ends there—jolly things to play with on a rainy day—but now Dick and Janet had lost all desire to have fun.

Splashing and dashing more rain pelted into the attic through the broken glass in the skylight.

“Here’s a pail! I’ll put that under it,” and Dick found a little wooden bucket in one corner, and set it under the hole in the roof.

“That will do for a time,” said Mrs. Cherry. “Oh, I’m so sorry this happened! This storm is going to last all night, I fear. We shall have to leave something under the leak and if it gets full and runs over, after we are asleep, it will spoil the ceilings just the same. Oh, my

two Wild Cherries you shouldn't have done this!"

"I didn't break the glass—Dick did!" declared Janet.

"Yes, my dear, I know, but—"

Again came that loud ringing at the front door bell. It was followed by a thumping sound in the second floor hall.

"Is that you, Jane? Did anything happen?" asked Mrs. Cherry.

"Yes'm, I'm here," answered the cook.

"What happened?"

"I just dropped the tub I was bringing up."

"Oh! Well, I'm glad you weren't hurt. Listen, Jane, did you hear the front door bell ring?"

"Yes'm, I did. And I was going to answer it so I let go of the tub. It's right here at the foot of the attic stairs; the tub is."

"I'll bring it up!" quickly offered Dick.

"I'll help!" added his sister. They raced for the stairs, reached them at the same time and then there was a struggle to see who would go down first.

"Get out the way and let me go down,

Jan!" ordered Dick. "I'm going to get the tub!"

"Well, you can't bring it up alone! I'm going to help."

"Children! Children! What has gotten into you to-day?" murmured Mrs. Cherry. "You never used to act this way!"

"Well, make her let me go down the stairs first—I'm older 'n she is!" demanded Dick. "And I'm bigger 'n stronger!"

"Yes, dear, let Dick go first and get the tub," suggested Mrs. Cherry. "You may help him if you like," she went on, as she saw Janet about to object. "And please hurry. This old pail leaks, I think, and the water is running out about as fast as it rains in."

Obedying her mother, Janet stood aside and let her brother go down the stairs first. Then she followed and the two of them, with many a thump and bump, hoisted the small wooden wash tub up the attic stairs. It was placed under the broken skylight window and the rain now pelted down through the opening without doing any damage.

"You can telephone daddy to bring up a light of glass and put it in," suggested Dick,

anxious to do what he could to make things right, for he had caused the accident.

“Yes, I shall do that,” Mrs. Cherry said, as she made sure that the rain was entering the tub and not splashing over on the floor. “Oh, why doesn’t Jane answer the door?” she asked as, once more, the front bell rang loudly. “Jane! Jane! Are you going to the door?”

“Yes’m, right away, Mrs. Cherry. But I had to go out in the kitchen to turn down the gas stove so the meat wouldn’t burn. I’m coming! I’m coming!” Jane called, as whoever it was at the front door began punching the bell to make it ring in a funny way, like some one performing on a drum.

“I wonder who it is?” murmured Janet as she and her brother followed their mother down stairs out of the attic.

“Maybe it’s one of the Gipsies,” suggested Dick.

“What would one of the Gipsies come here for?” his sister wanted to know. “We don’t have any fortunes told.”

“Well, maybe they want to buy some more wood from daddy’s hardware store,” Dick went on.

Some time before, as I told you in the book just ahead of this one, the two Wild Cherries had some adventures with a tribe of Gipsies living in the cranberry bog. This was just outside the town of Vernon in which the Cherry family lived and where Mr. Cherry owned a store. Grandma Cherry's valuable cameo pin had been lost, and at first it was thought a Gipsy boy might have taken it.

But this was not so. Dick and Janet, however, became friendly with Tamma, the Gipsy lad, and some of the men from the tribe used to buy wood from Mr. Cherry, burning it under their camp kettles.

"I don't guess it's a Gipsy," said Janet. "They wouldn't come out in the rain."

"Pooh! Gipsies don't mind rain!" scoffed Dick.

But it was not one of the dark-skinned wanderers ringing the front door bell of the Cherry home. Dick and Janet soon learned this, for Jane came back into the hall to say to her mistress:

"It's a special delivery."

"Do you mean a telegram, Jane?" asked Mrs. Cherry.

"No'm, a special delivery letter from the post office. The boy brought it and he's all wet."

"Oh, the poor lad!" murmured Mrs. Cherry. "Ask him to step in, Jane, while I sign for the letter. And then get him an umbrella."

"Yes'm," murmured the maid.

Down to the front hall, after their mother, trooped the two Wild Cherries. They had been more wild than usual this rainy day.

"Come in, my boy! Oh, how wet you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry, as she saw the special delivery lad from the post office.

"I'm used to being wet," he answered with a laugh. "We letter carriers have to be out in all sorts of weather," he added with a manly laugh.

"Yes, I know, my dear, but you are so young," went on Mrs. Cherry as she signed the slip. It was a damp piece of paper, and the letter, with its blue stamp, was also wet.

"I'm 'most fifteen!" answered the lad with an air of pride.

"Well, here is ten cents for yourself," said Mrs. Cherry kindly, as she gave the lad a dime, while Jane brought out an old but good umbrella.

“Oh, I get paid by the post office for taking out specials,” and the boy drew back.

“I know you do—but this is extra—on account of the rain,” and Mrs. Cherry smiled.

“Oh, all right! Thank you,” and the boy took the money. “But I thought maybe you had an idea you had to pay for the delivery. You don’t, you know. The person who sends the letter, and puts the ten cent special delivery stamp on, pays.”

“Yes, I know,” said Mrs. Cherry, who was trying to learn, by looking at the postmark before opening it, where the letter was from. However, as the mark was blurred by the rain, she could not read it.

“Thanks! I’ll bring this umbrella back after the storm,” promised the post office lad.

Dick and Janet looked at him with interest as he smiled brightly at them and again went out into the storm.

Mrs. Cherry had now torn open the envelope and was rapidly reading the letter.

“Oh, dear! This is too bad!” she murmured.

“Has anything happened?” asked Janet, for there was a note of alarm in her mother’s voice.

“Well, it isn’t very serious, I’m glad to say,”

answered Mrs. Cherry, as she read the letter to the end. "My brother—that's your Uncle Harry Kent—is taken ill, and his wife writes to know if your father can come on to Summer Hill and manage the mill."

"What mill?" exclaimed Dick, suddenly interested.

"And where's Summer Hill?" Janet wanted to know.

"Summer Hill is where Uncle Harry lives," explained Mrs. Cherry. "He has a grist mill there—an old-fashioned grist mill, run by water power. You were there once, when you were very small, but I suppose you have forgotten."

"Has the mill got a splashing wheel that the water turns?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I believe so."

"But how can daddy go out there and manage Uncle Harry's Mill?" Janet asked. "Doesn't daddy have to stay here and manage his own store?"

"Well, I suppose Aunt Laura thought daddy could come on for a week or two while Uncle Harry is so very ill. I must send them a telegram at once."

“Oh, Mother, could we go to see the mill?” begged Dick.

“Is it in the country?” asked Janet.

“Yes, dear, I mean yes, the mill is in the country. I don’t mean that you children can go—we must see about that! Oh, so many things are happening at once! I must telephone your father—”

“There’s the telephone ringing now!” cried Dick, as a tinkling bell sounded through the house.

Jane came hurrying down from the attic, where she had gone to see if the tub was properly catching the rain, and the maid exclaimed:

“That tub’s leaking, Mrs. Cherry, and the water’s running all over the floor! I’ll have to get a tin basin!”

“Yes, do, Jane! Oh, yes! Yes! I’m coming!” she cried, as the telephone bell continued to ring. “I wonder who this is?” thought Mrs. Cherry.

CHAPTER III

THE GIPSY'S WARNING

WHILE Jane hurried up to the attic to put a basin, which didn't leak, under the broken window in the skylight, Mrs. Cherry hastened to the ringing telephone. Dick and Janet followed her, and, to his credit, let it be said that Dick was sorry he had caused so much work.

"I wish I hadn't broken that glass," he murmured to his sister, as he noticed the worried look on his mother's face.

"Well, I guess it was partly my fault," admitted Janet.

"How do you mean—your fault?" asked her brother. "Didn't I yank on the rope and snap the hook against the skylight?"

"Yes, but if I hadn't yelled so loud mother wouldn't have come up and made us stop and the glass wouldn't be broke. Next time I'll be a good captive and let you haul me up, Dick."

“No,” spoke Dick with a shake of his head, “I don’t guess we’ll play that game any more. I know a better one.”

“Oh, what is it?” cried Janet with sparkling eyes.

“I’ll tell you after a while,” her brother replied. By this time Mrs. Cherry had reached the telephone. Lifting the receiver off the hook stopped the bell ringing, but the children were talking so much that she could not hear what was said. So she had to call:

“Dick! Janet! Please be quiet a moment!”

Then the two Wild Cherries heard their mother go on:

“Oh, it’s you, is it, Robert! Such a time as we’ve had! I’m so glad you called up! Listen!”

“It’s daddy,” whispered Dick.

“Yes,” agreed his sister. “He calls up lots of times just before he comes home from the store to see if mother wants anything. I guess that’s what he’s doing now.”

And so Mr. Cherry was. His wife went on, speaking to him over the telephone:

“No, no! The *children* didn’t fall in the water—I didn’t say that! I said the water is

leaking in through the broken skylight—who broke it— Oh, I'll tell you about that when you come home. But bring along a light of glass with you to keep out the rain—no, that's all—just the glass. Oh, and say—I nearly forgot—a special delivery letter just came from Harry—yes, brother Harry who has the mill at Summer Hill. He's sick and wants you to come out there—yes, we'll talk that over when you get home."

Mrs. Cherry hung up the telephone and turned to the children.

"That was your father," she remarked, though Dick and Janet had already guessed it. "He's going to bring home a piece of glass to put in the skylight."

Mr. Cherry sold window glass as well as hardware at his store, and Dick and Janet had often watched the clerks cutting small panes from large pieces, using a black diamond to make a line on the brittle sheet. Then it would break evenly and cleanly.

"Now, Dick, since it was your fault that the skylight is broken," went on Mrs. Cherry, "suppose you go up and see if Jane needs any help in placing the tin basin under the leak."

“Yes’m,” answered the boy. “I’ll go.”

“And, Janet,” went on her mother, “you please come with me and help me get supper. Daddy is coming home a bit earlier on account of the rain.”

“Yes’m,” dutifully answered the girl. “And, Mother,” she went on, “may we go to Sumner Hill and see daddy run the mill?”

“That’s a rhyme!” laughed Dick, on his way to the attic. “Hill and mill!”

“Oh, so it is!” and Janet joined in the laughter. “May we go, Mother?” she asked again. “I mean out to see Uncle Harry?”

“We shall need to talk that over with your father when he comes home,” replied Mrs. Cherry. “Come now—get the table set; and you, Dick, see if Jane needs any help.”

“Yes’m!” chorused the two children. And then, for a time, once more peace and quiet reigned in the Cherry household.

The rain seemed to come down harder all the while, and Daddy Cherry arrived in such a downpour that it was like a flood, he said. However he was soon snug and dry in the house and after supper the Cherry family gathered

about the cleared-off table to talk about many things—chiefly about the special delivery letter.

For Mr. Cherry had managed to put a piece of glass in the skylight and this kept out most of the rain.

“But after this, Dick, don’t be quite so much of a cut-up,” begged his father.

“No, sir,” answered the boy.

“And are we going to Summer Hill?” Janet wanted to know.

“Oh, these children! They never forget a thing—except when I send them to the store!” laughed Mrs. Cherry. “But what do you say, Robert,” she asked her husband, “do you think it possible that you could go and look after the mill while Harry is in bed?”

“Let me see the letter,” begged Mr. Cherry, and the one that had come by special delivery in the rain was handed to him. He read it carefully. It told how the children’s uncle, Harry Kent, was ill, and the letter, which was written by Aunt Laura, Mr. Kent’s wife, went on to say:

“Besides illness we have other trouble. There is a mortgage on the mill that must be

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paid off, and unless the mill can be run and money taken in to pay the mortgage, I fear we may lose everything. That is why we are so anxious to have Robert come and manage things. He knows a lot about machinery, and, I am sure, he can keep the mill going all summer. We have plenty of water behind the dam now.”

“What’s a mortgage?” asked Dick, when his father had finished with the letter, some parts of which he read aloud.

“And what does Aunt Laura mean by water behind the dam?” Janet wanted to know.

“Do you think you can go and manage to run the mill?” inquired Mrs. Cherry.

“My! What a lot of questions!” laughed Daddy Cherry. “Well, I’ll try to answer them all. First Dick’s question about a mortgage. It is rather hard for little boys and girls to understand.

“However, a mortgage means that a man has borrowed some money and he promises to pay it back at a certain time. If he doesn’t pay the money back he must give up something that he owns—a house, a mill or perhaps an automobile.”

"Will we have to give up our auto?" asked Dick in alarm.

"No, son, there is no mortgage on it," answered his father. "But there is a mortgage on Uncle Harry's mill, and unless the money is paid the mill may be taken away from him."

"I think he could pay the money if the mill could be kept running," remarked Mrs. Cherry.

"Well, then we must try to keep the wheels turning," said her husband.

"Do you think you can, Robert?"

"Yes, I guess so. I was going to take a vacation, anyhow. I can leave Mr. Snell in charge of my store. As your brother says, I do know how to run a grist mill. He showed me a lot about it when we were out there five years ago."

"Oh, then are we going to Summer Hill?" cried Janet, clapping her hands in joy. "And what's water behind the dam?" the little girl continued.

"Yes, I think we can spend a few months in the country," decided her father. "We'll help Uncle Harry run the mill. And what your aunt means by plenty of water behind the dam is that there is enough to keep the mill wheel

turning. They build a dam, or big wall, to make a pond of deep water, Janet, and they let the water run out slowly, as they need it, over the mill wheel, which it turns."

"I know!" cried Dick. "Once, when it rained hard like it's raining now, we fellows put some bricks and boards and a lot of mud in the gutter, and we made a dam and the water backed up and made a big puddle."

"Oh, is that what a dam is?" asked Janet. "Now I know."

"And the water splashes over the mill wheel and turns it as fast as anything," went on Dick. "I saw one once, in the movies."

"You want to keep away from that mill wheel, though," warned Mr. Cherry, shaking his finger at the children.

"Oh, do you think there will be danger?" asked his wife in some alarm.

"Not if they're careful," was the reply.

"When can we go to Summer Hill?" asked Janet.

"Oh, in about a week, I guess," answered her father.

The two Wild Cherries went to bed that night, their heads filled with happy thoughts,

and they fell asleep to have pleasant dreams of the beautiful country. The rain drummed a gentle lullaby on the roof, and drops fell with a tinkling sound, through a little hole in the mended skylight, dropping into the tin basin.

The next day a reply was sent to Uncle Harry, saying that the Cherry family would soon be at Summer Hill, to give him what help they could.

"If we are to go to the country for the summer, my Wild Cherries," cautioned their mother, "I can't have any more cannibal tricks or the breaking of skylights."

"Oh, no'm, I'll be careful!" promised Dick.

"So will I!" added his sister.

There was much to be done to get ready to go to the old mill, and among the duties was considerable shopping for Mrs. Cherry. One day, when Dick had gone off to play with Sam Ward and Jimmie Blake, Mrs. Cherry took Janet down town.

They were coming out of one of the stores, having purchased a new dress for Janet, when they saw a crowd out in the street. A policeman was directing four men who seemed to be carrying something.

“What is it?” asked Mrs. Cherry of the attendant in uniform who opened the store doors for customers.

“A lady has been struck by an automobile,” was the answer. “The policeman is having her carried in here.”

“Oh, I hope she isn’t badly hurt!” murmured Mrs. Cherry.

A moment later the man carried the injured woman into the vestibule of the store. And as Janet caught a glimpse of her, the little girl exclaimed:

“Why, it’s Madame Deborah!”

“Yes, so it is—the Gipsy fortune-teller!” agreed Mrs. Cherry. “But she hasn’t on her red and yellow dress with the brass spangles. Poor woman! I hope she isn’t badly hurt.”

“No, Mrs. Cherry, said Policeman Conner, who knew the mother of Dick and Janet. “She’s just a bit stunned and bruised. But she fainted so I thought it best to have her carried in here. Do you know her?”

“Well, we don’t exactly know her,” Mrs. Cherry replied. “But my husband and I, and the children, also, have seen her out at the Gipsy camp near the cranberry bog. She calls her-

self Madame Deborah and she claims to be a fortune-teller. If she isn't too badly hurt I could take her home in my car."

"Well, that would be a kind thing for you to do. I think she'll be all right in a moment. They've sent for the store doctor and nurse. Here they come, now."

Madame Deborah—for she it was—though without her colorful Gipsy dress, soon opened her eyes when the doctor had given her some medicine.

"Oh! What happened?" she murmured as she looked around at the throng gathered about her. She had been carried to a quiet part of the store and placed on a couch. Mrs. Cherry and Janet had followed.

"You were hit by an auto, lady," answered Policeman Conner. "If you want to go to a hospital I'll call an ambulance, or this lady will take you home—that is to your camp, lady."

"Oh, I am not hurt enough for a hospital. I am all right. I wish to go to my own people. You say some one will take me—I am weak and faint—but I am not hurt."

"Yes, Madame Deborah, I will take you," offered Mrs. Cherry.

The Gipsy fortune-teller looked at her. She smiled faintly and said:

“Ah, I remember you—the mother of the Wild Cherries—the Wild Cherries who rode off in Kobah’s red wagon.”

“Yes,” answered Mrs. Cherry, “and one of my wild ones—Janet—is with me now. Do you remember her?”

“Oh, surely!” answered Madame Deborah. “One does not forget a Wild Cherry,” and she laughed a little, for she was feeling better.

When the doctor had decided that it would be safe to move the Gipsy woman, Policeman Conner helped Madame Deborah into Mrs. Cherry’s auto, for she and Janet had come shopping in it, leaving it parked near the store. The mud and dirt were brushed from the black dress which the fortune-teller wore in place of her gaily spangled robe, and soon she was on her way back to the camp of her people near the cranberry bog.

“It is very kind of you, Madame, to take this trouble for me,” said the Gipsy.

“I am glad to help you,” remarked Mrs. Cherry.

“You are very good. I wish I might do

something for you—but my stock in trade is to tell fortunes—and you—you do not believe in the Gipsies.” Madame Deborah smiled, showing her white, even teeth.

“No, I do not believe in fortune-telling,” answered Mrs. Cherry.

“Do you believe in warnings?” suddenly asked the dark-faced wanderer when the car was nearly at the cranberry bog.

“Warnings—well, it depends on what kind,” was Mrs. Cherry’s smiling reply, while Janet wondered what it was all about.

“Then I shall give you a Gipsy’s warning,” went on Madame Deborah, and she seemed very much in earnest. “Beware of the deep and rushing water! That is my warning! Beware of the deep and rushing water, for in that there is danger—danger for you—danger for the Wild Cherries. You will not let me tell your fortune—but heed the Gipsy’s warning, I beg of you! Beware the deep and rushing water!”

She spoke so solemnly that Janet felt afraid, and drew more closely to her mother. What did the Gipsy’s warning mean?

CHAPTER IV

KETCHUP BOTTLES

“MOTHER, do you s’pose there’s any danger in deep water?” asked Janet.

“Why, my dear, of course; there is always danger in deep water.”

Madame Deborah, now fully recovered from the shaking and jarring she had received in the automobile accident, had been left at the Gipsy camp in the cranberry bog—the same camp that Dick and Janet had often visited, as I told you in the book before this one. And Janet and her mother were motoring home, having left the fortune-teller with her friends, when the little Cherry girl asked this question.

“But I mean, Mother,” went on Janet, “is there danger for us in deep water? What did Madame Deborah mean?”

“I don’t know what she meant, my dear, and I don’t believe she quite knew herself. These Gipsies love to be strange and mysterious.”

“But we are going to Uncle Harry’s mill,” continued Janet, “and there is deep water there, behind the dam, ’cause Dick said so. Does Madame Deborah mean we’ll fall in the deep water?”

“Now listen, Janet, and don’t get silly notions in your head,” laughed Mrs. Cherry as she slowed down the car to avoid running over a dog that ran, barking, into the road. “Neither a Gipsy woman, nor anyone else, can tell fortunes, nor say what is going to happen in the future. Nor can Madame Deborah warn about danger. Of course she can guess, the same as you or I can. And that is all.”

“But how did she know we were going to Summer Hill, where there is deep water?” asked Janet.

“She didn’t really know it—she just guessed it,” said Mrs. Cherry. “I suppose you or Dick may have spoken to Tamma, the Gipsy boy, about going away for the summer. We usually go away each summer. And wherever we go—in fact wherever any one goes for the summer there is, nearly always, deep water of one kind or another.

“So it is very easy to say there is danger in

deep water—as, of course, there is. And if one falls into deep water, and one cannot swim, there is more danger.”

“But Dick and I can swim!” exclaimed Janet. “I’m glad of that!”

“Yes, so am I,” said Mrs. Cherry. “But now don’t worry any more about the Gipsy’s warning—it doesn’t mean anything. Madame Deborah just wished to seem mysterious and strange. It was her way, that’s all. But she knows no more what may happen at the deep water near Uncle Harry’s mill than I do.”

“And do you know anything that is going to happen, Mother?”

“Well, I think you and Dick are going to have fun out there,” was the laughing answer, “and I think daddy is going to have hard work. And I hope my brother will get better and not lose his mill.”

“I hope that, too,” murmured Janet. “Oh, what fun we’ll have at the old mill!” she sang in a gladsome voice. “I’m so happy!”

Mrs. Cherry and Janet safely reached home in the car, though Jane was beginning to worry about them, for they were gone rather longer than usual.

“But we had such an adventure!” exclaimed Janet.

“Did you really, my dear?” asked Jane, who was almost like one of the family.

“Yes, and there was a Gipsy’s warning!”

“You don’t mean it!” cried Jane, for Janet whispered the words with almost as mysterious an air as that used by Madame Deborah.

“Yes; but it doesn’t mean anything!” laughed the little girl as she told the story.

“Did she say we could catch any fish at the mill pond?” Dick wanted to know, when he heard what had happened. “There ought to be big fish in deep water.”

“No, she didn’t say anything about that,” answered Janet. “I guess she meant you or I would fall in.”

“Well, I am going to fall in!” declared the boy.

“Oh, Dick Cherry!” gasped Janet. “Fall in deep water—Oh—”

“I mean I’m going to dive in when I go swimming!” laughed Dick, who was fond of teasing his sister.

“Oh!” she murmured. “But that’s different!”

38 TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE COUNTRY

In spite of the fact that Mrs. Cherry told the children not to think, and, most of all, not to worry about the Gipsy's warning, Dick and Janet could not help dwelling on it somewhat. And, as it happened some time later—

But there, I must not tell that part until the proper moment.

Busy days passed getting ready for the Cherry family to go to Summer Hill for what was to be a happy vacation for the children. In a way, it would be a vacation for Mr. Cherry also, for he could get out of his hardware store.

“And if I can run that I can run a grist mill,” he told his wife.

“What's grist?” Janet wanted to know.

“Grist is grain of different kinds,” explained her father. “It may be corn, wheat, rye or barley which the farmers bring to the mill to have ground into meal and flour.”

“Does Uncle Harry grind the corn like in our coffee mill?” the little girl wanted to know.

“Well, yes, somewhat, only the grist mill is much larger. There are two big wheels of stone that are turned by a big wooden wheel. The stone mill wheels are inside and the grains are ground into fine powder between them.

The wooden wheel is outside. Water falls over it from the dam and turns it."

"Oh," murmured Janet, "like Dick saw in the movies."

"Yes," went on Mr. Cherry. "By the way, where is Dick?" he asked his wife. "It is nearly supper time and he should be here."

"He and Sam Ward went over the lots a while ago—I saw them," reported Janet.

"Oh, well, I suppose he is playing. He'll be along presently," spoke Mrs. Cherry.

There were many places about the Cherry home in Vernon where Dick and his chums could have fun. Among the play-spots was the junk yard of Mr. Feldman. With a rickety wagon and a bony horse, called Old Ironsides by his master, and nicknamed "Gassy," by Dick and Janet, Mr. Feldman collected rags, bottles and old scrap iron.

Not only did he collect this sort of junk, but he would also buy the same kind, and many a boy or girl of Vernon earned pennies for spending by selling rags, bottles and bones to Mr. Feldman. For he would buy bones, also, and sell them to the fertilizer factory.

To the junk yard went, then, Dick and Sam.

There was always something there with which they could have fun—part of a broken auto, a damaged wagon or perhaps a bit of farm machinery. Sometimes from the pile of iron junk in the yard the boys would make what they called a “steam engine,” and on it they took imaginary trips all over the world. Bits of iron, rattled together, could be made to sound almost like a locomotive.

“Oh, there’s Mr. Feldman going out on his wagon now, with Gassy!” cried Dick, as he saw the junkman hitching up his bony horse.

“That’s right—maybe he’ll give us a ride!” echoed Sam.

The boys ran along the lane until they reached the yard where much junk was piled about. They saw the wagon nearly filled with bottles—hundreds of them—all shapes and sizes.

“What are you going to do with the bottles, Mr. Feldman?” asked Dick.

“Can we have a ride with you?” inquired Sam. “Please,” he added, as an afterthought.

“Sure you can come with me,” answered the good-natured junkman. “I am going by the glass factory with the bottles.”

“Do you want any more?” asked Dick, suddenly thinking of something.

“What—more bottles?” Mr. Feldman inquired. “Sure I do! The more I buy the more I can sell. What is it you have—more bottles?”

“There’s a lot of bottles out on our back stoop,” went on Dick. “I saw ’em there when I was coming over here. I guess Jane put ’em out to throw away. Will you buy ’em off me, Mr. Feldman?”

“Sure I buy ’em. At the glass factory they want bottles to break and melt up and make new bottles. Bring me your bottles—I buy!”

“Come on, Sam! Help me get ’em!” invited Dick. “We’ll bring ’em here in my express cart. You wait for us, Mr. Feldman.”

“Sure I wait—I got to load more bottles on anyhow.”

Off raced the boys. As Dick had said, standing on his back stoop were two score, or more, empty bottles.

“They’re nice and clean,” remarked Sam, as he helped his chum load them into Dick’s express wagon.

“Yes, I guess Jane washed ’em like she does

the milk bottles. Say, we ought to get a lot of money from Mr. Feldman for these."

"Sure we had," declared Sam.

Soon they were back at the junk yard. Mr. Feldman was ready to drive to the glass factory, but he waited to look at the boys' load.

"How much for 'em?" asked Dick.

"Twelve cents," replied the junkman, after a look.

"That's six cents apiece!" cried Dick joyfully. "Come on, chuck 'em on the wagon, Sam."

The bottles were tossed up on the junk load of others, many being broken, but this did not matter since they would all be crushed before being dumped into the glass furnace.

"Well, you boys are coming with me—yes?" asked Mr. Feldman, when his creaking wagon was so loaded down that the springs seemed about to break.

"Not now, I guess, thank you," replied Dick.

"We're going to the candy store!" laughed Sam, rattling his share of the twelve cents.

"Ha! You will never be rich if you spend all you get!" warned Mr. Feldman with a laugh. "You should save your money!"

However this did not worry Dick or Sam, and they were soon busy in Aunt Sallie Patten's little store, picking out the kind of candy that they received the most of for a cent.

It was later in the afternoon, when Dick, tired, dirty, but happy from the day's fun returned home, that matters changed a bit.

"Dick," asked his mother when he had washed for supper, "did you do anything to some bottles that were out on the back stoop?"

"Bottles—on the back stoop?" repeated Dick, with a sinking feeling around his heart.

"Yes, Jane washed a lot and set them out to dry. She is making ketchup and was going to fill the bottles. Some were for Mrs. Merton. Did you see anyone take the bottles? I hope the Gipsies—"

"Oh, were those your ketchup bottles, Mother?" gasped Dick.

"Yes—why?"

"I—now—I sold 'em to the junkman!" murmured Dick.

CHAPTER V

OFF TO SUMMER HILL

SILENCE—deep, heavy silence—fell over the Cherry family when Dick answered his mother.

“You—you sold my ketchup bottles!” exclaimed Mrs. Cherry. “Why, some of them belonged to Mrs. Merton! Did you sell all of them, Dick?”

“Yes’m—every one,” he replied. “I didn’t know they were any good. “Sam and I—we saw ’em on the back stoop, and Mr. Feldman was loading his wagon to go to the glass factory, and he gave us twelve cents for the bottles.”

“Twelve cents for all those lovely, clean ketchup bottles; and with patent stoppers, too!” sighed Mrs. Cherry. “Why, Jane just washed them and set them out to dry and—”

“Yes, we thought they were pretty clean,” commented Dick, “and we sorter wondered why. But Mr. Feldman—he buys clean bottles or dirty bottles—he doesn’t care!”

"I shouldn't think he would!" chuckled Mr. Cherry. "I guess your bottles are gone, my dear," he added to his wife. "But, Dick, you shouldn't take bottles off the back stoop without first asking about them."

"I wouldn't have taken them if they were milk bottles," said the boy, "'cause I know they have to go back. But I didn't know mother was making ketchup."

"Couldn't you smell it?" demanded Janet. "I should think anybody could smell ketchup cooking."

"I smelled something," admitted Dick, "but I didn't know it was stuff to go in the bottles on the back stoop."

"Well, my dear, of course you didn't mean to do wrong," sighed his mother, "but you have made a great deal of trouble. I promised Mrs. Merton that I would fill some ketchup bottles for her, and half of those you sold to the junkman were hers."

Dick looked sorrowful and then he had a sudden idea.

"Say!" he cried. "Maybe I can get those bottles back?"

"How?" asked his father. "By this time

they are probably broken up ready to be thrown into the glass factory furnace.”

“No, I don’t believe Mr. Feldman has got there yet!” cried Dick. “Gassy, his horse, goes awful slow, and it’s a good ways to the factory where they make bottles. I can go on my bicycle and get there before Mr. Feldman does. I’ll make him give the bottles back—Oh, no! I can’t, either!” he concluded, with a sudden air of dejection.

“Why can’t you get the bottles back if you get to the glass factory before Mr. Feldman does?” asked Mr. Cherry. “And from what I know of his horse, I should say you wouldn’t need to ride very fast to beat poor old Gassy.”

“Oh, I can beat Gassy all right,” admitted Dick. Indeed the old horse was very slow. He had never run away but once—the time when Dick and his chums played Wild West, as I have told you.

“Well, then if you get to the glass factory first,” said Mr. Cherry, “Mr. Feldman will return the bottles, I’m sure.”

“I—now—we—we spent the twelve cents he gave us for them,” spoke Dick. “Sam and I spent the money, and if we ask for the bottles

back Mr. Feldman will want his money back.”

“Yes, I guess he will,” chuckled Daddy Cherry. “Well, I suppose this loss will fall on me. Here,” he went on, taking a dime and two pennies from his pocket. “Ride after Mr. Feldman, if you think you can catch him, and ask him to sell you back the bottles. Tell him they are your mother’s ketchup bottles.”

“I will!” cried Dick, glad of a way out of the trouble. “I’ll hitch my express wagon to my bike and bring the bottles back with me. But maybe some of ’em are broken—I’m pretty sure they are,” he added, remembering several crashes of glass as the bottles were loaded on the junk wagon.

“Well, save as many as you can,” urged his father.

“I’ll wait supper for you,” promised his mother.

Dick tied his express wagon to his bicycle and was soon rattling down the road. As he passed Sam Ward’s house that lad was hanging on the front gate.

“Where’s the fire?” joked Sam as he saw Dick rattling past.

“There isn’t any fire—but I got to get

mother's ketchup bottles back!" cried Dick. He explained what had happened.

"Well," said Sam, "it's too bad, but I spent my six cents and—"

"Oh, daddy gave me the money," broke in Dick. "So that's all right."

"Then I'll come with you," offered Sam. "I'll ride on the handle bars," which he did.

With the empty express wagon rattling behind them, the two boys made good speed down the road which they knew the junkman would take to the bottle factory. They were lucky in catching him just as he was about to unload.

"What's the matter now, boys—more bottles to sell?" asked Mr. Feldman with a grin behind his black, bushy beard.

"No, we want to buy back the ones we sold you," exclaimed Dick. "Here's the money."

"Oh—all right," assented the junkman, after thinking the matter over a few moments. "But some of the bottles they are busted."

"Well, we'll take all the good ones," decided Dick, and soon his express wagon was loaded again. About half a dozen of the ketchup flasks had been cracked, but Mr. Feldman spoke to one of the men at the glass factory, and

the boys were allowed to pick out six other bottles from a big pile—bottles that had patent corks and would be just as good, Dick thought, as the ones Jane had washed.

“You want to go slow on your way back, boys,” warned the junkman. “Maybe you should break more than a dozen bottles if you go too fast.”

“We’ll be careful,” promised Dick.

He really intended to be, but with Sam sitting on the handle bars in front of him, on the way back, Dick could not see very well, and, almost before he knew it he was headed for a tree alongside of the road.

“Look out!” yelled Sam. “You’re going to bump!”

Dick steered aside, but not quite in time. For he struck the tree a glancing blow, his bicycle skidded to one side and went over, throwing off him and Sam. As they landed on the ground, shaken up but not otherwise harmed, there sounded a crash of glass.

“More bottles busted!” sighed Dick as he picked himself up. The express wagon had swung around and banged up against the tree.

However it was not as bad as it sounded, for

only three more of the bottles were broken—being some of the extra ones the man at the glass factory had given them.

“Well, I guess I’d better not ride on the handle bars any farther, Dick,” said Sam, when they had righted the bicycle and picked out the broken bottles.

“Oh, yes, that’s all right—I’ll be more careful,” Dick said.

And, a little later, he safely reached home with his wagon load of flasks, much to the relief of his mother who had the ketchup all ready to put into the bottles.

The time was approaching when the Wild Cherries, with their father and mother, were to go to Summer Hill. Letters had passed back and forth between Mrs. Cherry and her brother who was ill in his home near the mill.

“He is much worried for fear he will lose his property,” said Mrs. Cherry to her husband. “But if the mill can be run during the summer, he says, enough money will be made to pay off the mortgage.”

“Then I’ll run the mill!” decided her husband. “And our two Wild Cherries shall help me!” and he looked at the children.

“Hurray!” cheered Dick.

“We’ll have lots of fun,” echoed Janet. “And,” she added to herself, “I hope there won’t be any danger in deep water.”

It had been planned for the Cherry family to go to Summer Hill by automobile. Mr. Cherry owned a large car which would hold his family and their baggage.

So, about two weeks after the special delivery letter had come on that day of the big rain, behold the Wild Cherries ready to start for Summer Hill and a glorious vacation in the country.

“All aboard!” cried Dick, as he and his sister took their places in the auto.

“Let’s see now, have we everything, I wonder?” spoke Mr. Cherry as he looked over the baggage.

“I think so,” his wife answered.

“All right—then we’ll start.”

He let in the clutch and the car began slowly moving along the street.

“Good-bye!” called Dick to some of his chums, who had gathered to see him off.

“Good-bye!” they echoed.

Janet waved to Sadie Clark and Lulu Wilson,

who had come to bid her good-bye. And then, as the auto was gathering speed, Janet suddenly cried:

“Oh, look out! Stop the car, Daddy! You’re going to run over Ethel May! Stop the car!”

CHAPTER VI

AT THE MILL

DADDY CHERRY pushed on the foot brake and pulled on the emergency brake so quickly that the automobile stopped very suddenly. So suddenly did it stop that Dick slipped off his seat.

“Whoa, Gassy!” he cried before he thought. He must have imagined he was riding like a cowboy on the back of the junkman’s horse.

“Oh, Janet!” exclaimed her mother.

Mr. Cherry, having stopped the car very quickly, started to leap out, crying as he did so:

“Is the little girl hurt? Did the wheels go over her! Oh, this is too bad!”

Janet looked at her father in surprise for a moment and then, with a merry laugh, she called out:

“There isn’t any little *girl* run over! Nobody’s run over!”

"But you said I was going to run over Ethel May!" exclaimed Mr. Cherry. "Didn't you? Didn't you cry out about Ethel May?"

"Yes, Daddy, I did," admitted Janet. "But Ethel May is my doll. There she is now, down on the ground. She dropped out of my arms and you almost ran over her. I wish you'd get Ethel May for me, Dick," she asked her brother.

"Pooh! All that fuss over a doll!" scoffed the Cherry boy. "If you want the old thing pick her up yourself!" he concluded a bit rudely, for he was feeling rather cross and foolish because of having slipped off the seat.

"Oh, Dick, that wasn't a kind thing to say to your sister," chided his mother. "Please get Janet's doll for her."

"Oh—all right," mumbled Dick, and slowly he left the auto and picked up what seemed to be a bundle of rags. "She got run over, anyhow, and serves her right," he muttered as he handed the object to his sister. "And she's all dust!"

"Well, she's only a rag doll, and I s'pose it doesn't hurt her much to get run over," said Janet with a sigh, as her father looked at her

mother with a queer expression on his face and shook his head. "If it had been my talking-mamma-doll that was run over it would be terrible! But I didn't bring my best doll, and I'm glad!"

"I didn't know you had a doll named Ethel May," said Mrs. Cherry, who knew most of Janet's little family.

"No, I just gave her that name this morning," went on the little girl. "I used to call her Martha Blake, but that name wasn't stylish enough so I changed it to Ethel May. Oh, dear, one of her shoe button eyes came out!" sighed Janet.

And it was true—the rag doll, stylish Miss Ethel May, had but one shoe button eye, and that dangled by a single thread as if ready, also, to lose itself.

"It's good enough for her!" mumbled Dick.

"Oh, you mean boy!" cried Janet. "I don't say that when something of yours gets broken!"

"There now, children, don't quarrel," begged Mrs. Cherry. "You shouldn't have said that, Dick. I suppose," she went on, "the shoe button was pulled off when we ran over—Ethel

May," and she laughed a little at the "stylish" name.

"I guess so," agreed Janet.

"She could have one of the buttons off my shoes, only my shoes lace up," said Dick, who seemed to have gotten good-natured again.

"I got some extra shoe buttons in my sewing bag," announced Janet. "I'll sew one on when I get to Uncle Harry's mill."

"Well, don't give me a fright like that again," begged Mr. Cherry when, once more, they were on their way. "I surely thought Ethel May was one of your little girl friends. I thought she had come to say good-bye and had gotten too close to the car."

"That's what I thought, at first," said Mrs. Cherry. "I might have known, though, if I had stopped to think, that there wasn't any little girl named Ethel May living near us. After this, Janet, when you change the name of any of your dolls, please tell me."

"Yes'm, Mother, I will," promised the little girl. "And now I'll put Ethel May to sleep," she added.

"Put her somewhere so she won't fall out again," advised her father.

"If she does, I won't pick her up," declared Dick.

"Nobody wants you to, smarty!" snapped back Janet.

"Children—children—" begged their mother.

Then the beauty of the day, and the thought of all the fun they expected to have in the country and at the mill, brought smiles to the faces of the two Wild Cherries. They had these little "spats" every once in a while, just as all real children do, and they were all the better friends afterwards.

The trip from Vernon, where the Cherries lived, to Summer Hill, the name of the country village where Uncle Harry's mill stood, was an all day's ride in an auto. Mr. Cherry had started early and he expected, unless accidents happened, to reach Summer Hill in time for supper.

Along the smooth roads, out of Vernon, into the country, now passing through some small town, and again through a larger city, went the auto load of Cherries—two of them wild.

Mr. Cherry's car was a good one, and they had no punctures or blow-outs, so by noon they were more than half way to Summer Hill.

They stopped for lunch in a little village hotel, and Dick and Janet ate so much that their mother said it would have been wise for them to take a walk instead of riding the remainder of the distance.

“Why?” asked Dick, who felt a bit hurt because he couldn’t have two pieces of pie.

“Well, exercise is good after such a hearty meal,” laughed his father. “However, I’ll take a back country road, which is rough and bumpy, and that will shake you up almost as much as a walk would do.”

But Mr. Cherry was only joking, and did not intend to take any roads that would delay him on the trip. He wanted to get to the mill as soon as possible and start to help his wife’s brother, so he would not worry about business as well as about his illness.

“I guess I’ll see if Ethel May is awake yet,” announced Janet, after a while, the auto having started off again following lunch.

“Pooh! How can she sleep with only one shoe button eye?” scoffed Dick.

“She can sleep just as well with one eye as she can with two!” declared Janet. “So there—smarty!”

“Children!” warned Mrs. Cherry once more.

But the little “spat,” for it was only that, and not a quarrel, came to a sudden end as Dick, glancing toward a house they were then passing, cried out:

“Oh, look at that lady!”

Well might he cry out, for they all saw a strange sight.

In a yard at the side of the house was a lady. She was near a clothes post, and racing around her was a big dog, but this was not the strangest part of it.

For the woman was bound to the post by many coils of clothes line, wound in circles about her, and the dog, with one end of the line in his mouth, was binding more coils around the lady who was loudly calling for help.

“Look at her!” gasped Dick again. “Look!”

“It’s just like you tied me once when you were playing Indian and I was a captive. Don’t you ’member—to a stake?” cried Janet.

“Yes—I remember!” answered Dick, but he did not take his eyes from the woman bound to the post, and the dog circling about her with the trailing clothes line.

“Robert, you must help her!” cried Mrs.

Cherry. "That dog—oh, isn't it terrible! He may bite her!"

"No, I hardly think so," said Mr. Cherry, and Dick and Janet could see that he was laughing. "The dog is only playing," he added, "look at his tail how it wags."

And, indeed, the dog's tail was waving like a flag in the wind. The Wild Cherries knew enough about dogs to understand that when one is angry he never wags his tail.

"But, Robert," went on Mrs. Cherry to her husband, "you must untangle her from the line!"

"Yes, of course I'll do that," he said.

As he spoke he brought the automobile to a stop in front of the house, and, leaping out, he ran toward the yard in which the clothes posts were planted. Seeing him coming the woman called out:

"Don't be afraid of Jack. He won't hurt anyone!"

"He doesn't look as if he would," laughed Mr. Cherry, for the dog had now dropped the end of the line that was nearly all wound about the woman and the post, and was leaping up and down, barking joyfully, wagging his tail

and seeming to ask some one to play tag with him.

“No, he’s just full of fun,” went on the woman bound to the post. “This is the second time he’s done this to me, and once I had to stay tied up for ten minutes until my husband came to release me. It’s one of Jack’s tricks.”

“Rather a queer one,” said Mrs. Cherry, for, followed by the children, she had left the auto to walk over and see if her help might be needed.

“Yes, it is a queer trick,” admitted the woman. Mr. Cherry was now unwinding the rope from her and the post. “I should have been on the lookout for him when I started to put up the line. But he caught one end in his mouth as soon as I fastened my end to this post, and, before I knew it, he had raced around and around me, binding me fast.”

While Mr. Cherry was releasing the woman, Jack, the dog, sat down on the grass, his head cocked to one side, and with what was almost a grin on his face. He seemed to be laughing, as if saying:

“There, see what I did! Now let’s see you get her loose!”

However, this was soon done and the woman, who said her name was Mrs. Watson, stepped out of the loosened coils, and, shaking her finger at the dog, exclaimed:

“Jack, you’re a bad one! I’m going to whip you! Bring me a stick!”

Jack barked once or twice, but did not move. He looked at Mrs. Watson with his head on one side.

“Did you hear me? I said you were a bad dog and I must whip you! Bring me a stick!”

Somewhat to the surprise of the two Wild Cherries, the dog gave another bark and then, with hanging head and drooping tail, walked around the yard as if looking for something. While they all watched, he picked up a little stick—really a dried weed, in his mouth and brought it to Mrs. Watson, dropping it at her feet.

“Oh, so that’s the kind of a stick you bring me to whip you with, is it?” she asked with a laugh. “You ought to be whipped with a heavy stick for playing such a trick on me. But I’ll be good to you because you have company.”

She then tapped him lightly with the weed,

during which time Jack, as if thoroughly ashamed of himself, crouched on the ground and cringed at her feet. Then, throwing away the stick, Mrs. Watson exclaimed:

“Now get up and be a good dog!”

Up jumped Jack with a joyful bark, frisking about, leaping at his mistress and showing how happy he was by wagging his tail.

“Thank you, very much, for coming to help me,” said Mrs. Watson to Mr. Cherry, when she had finally quieted the dog.

“We didn’t know what to make of it at first,” said Mrs. Cherry.

“No, I suppose it must have been a strange sight,” admitted Mrs. Watson with a smile. “But, as I say, Jack did it once before so I knew what to expect. He seems to think I put up the clothes line just for him to play with. He often gets an end of it in his mouth and tangles it all up. But he doesn’t so often wind me around with it. This is only his second attempt at that. Won’t you come in?” she invited the travelers.

“Thank you, no, we are on our way to Summer Hill,” said Mr. Cherry, “and we had better be moving along.”

“Well, then I think I’ll chain Jack up until I have strung my line,” went on Mrs. Watson. “I’m late with my washing this week,” she apologized to Mrs. Cherry, “but I wanted to get some things dry as a woman is coming to iron to-morrow. Wouldn’t the children like some milk and cookies? I have some I just baked.”

She must have known, from the looks on the faces of Dick and Janet, that they greatly desired the refreshments, for, without another word, she led the way to the house and they followed.

“I suppose we can’t very well refuse—now,” said Mr. Cherry in a low voice to his wife.

And, not only did Dick and Janet have some fresh cookies and cool milk, but their father and mother did also. And so did Jack, for he slipped into the house, and looked so appealingly up at Janet as he sat near her while she was eating, that she fed him bits of her cooky, which he took daintily from her hand.

“Well, we really must be going,” said Mr. Cherry, after a while.

“Yes, if we don’t want to arrive after dark,” added Mrs. Cherry.

“The roads are very good between here and Summer Hill,” advised Mrs. Watson.

Soon the Cherries, having said good-bye to their new acquaintance, were on their way again, and, without further adventure, they reached the old mill.

“Oh, what a lovely place!” exclaimed Janet as she caught a glimpse of it from the road.

“We can have dandy fun here,” cried Dick.

As they alighted from the car in front of the house, which adjoined the old mill, there came from an open door a loud voice crying:

“Help! Help! Help!”

Mr. and Mrs. Cherry looked at each other, and Dick and Janet paused, wondering what this might mean.

CHAPTER VII

THE LONELY CABIN

“THERE’S trouble here!” cried Mr. Cherry as he ran toward the open door of the house adjoining the mill.

“Oh, what can have happened?” murmured his wife.

Dick and Janet were beginning to think that their summer outing in the country was going to be spoiled. For if anything had happened to Uncle Harry they could not stay at the mill—they would have to go back to Vernon.

Even before Mr. Cherry, followed by his wife and children, reached the door, there came another loud voice shouting:

“Let me go! Let me go! Oh, help! Help!”

“Robert! What can it mean?” gasped Mrs. Cherry.

"I don't know," he answered. "I hope no one is hurt."

"We ought to call a policeman!" gasped Janet.

"Pooh! They don't have police in the country!" said Dick.

"They do so—I've seen 'em in the movies an' they're terrible funny!" declared Janet. "They fall out of automobiles an' everything, an' if we could call the police—"

But suddenly, even while she was speaking, the cries for help ceased and to the ears of the Cherry family came sweet music—a jolly tune played by a band it seemed.

And then, to the open door of the house adjoining the old mill, came a woman who smiled at seeing the visitors.

"Oh, Helen, I'm so glad you came!" she exclaimed.

"Laura! What is it? What has happened?" cried Mrs. Cherry to her brother's wife.

"Happened? Why nothing—Oh, you mean those cries for help. Why, that was the radio. Tim tuned in on some station where there was a bedtime story, or something like that, being

read. Then he turned that station off and tuned in on one where they are playing music. Do you hear it?"

"Oh—the radio!" gasped Dick.

"Wireless!" murmured his sister.

Mrs. Cherry sank limply down in a chair on the porch. Her husband took off his hat and wiped his face with his handkerchief.

"Did it frighten you?" asked Aunt Laura with a laugh.

"Well, we didn't know what to think," Mr. Cherry admitted. "We heard the cries for help, and I came rushing in."

"We never thought of a radio out here," added Mrs. Cherry.

"Oh, yes, we have a fine one, with a loud speaker," said her sister-in-law. "Since Harry has been ill he enjoys it so much. We have Tim Gordon, the foreman of the mill, come over to work it for us but I'm learning how."

"And we just happened to get here when the loud speaker was calling for help," laughed Mrs. Cherry, who was now over her little fright. "It sounded very like a human voice."

"Well, of course it was a human voice," spoke Aunt Laura. "As I remarked, Tim must

have tuned in on some station that was broadcasting a bedtime story, or perhaps it was some one reciting a piece. But Harry didn't care for it, so Tim tuned in on some music.

"Oh, but I'm so glad you're here, and Harry will be, also! Now come in and see him. He has been asking all day when you would arrive."

"Is he dangerously ill?" asked Mrs. Cherry, for she was very fond of her brother.

"He has been quite ill, but is getting better now," said Mrs. Kent, while Dick and Janet followed their parents into their uncle's home. "The doctor says he will have to stay in bed several weeks more, though, and when Harry got to worrying about running the mill, I decided the best thing to do would be to send for Robert."

"Well, I'm glad I could come," said the father of the two Wild Cherries. "We are going to spend our vacation here instead of at the seashore. It will do the children good. Say, that's pretty fine music," he went on, as the strains of a popular air filled the house.

"Yes, we have a good radio," Mrs. Kent replied.

"I got a little one home," said Dick.

“But it hasn’t any loud speaker,” added Janet.

“Then you may like to listen to ours,” went on Aunt Laura. “There is a strange man up in the hills back of the mill—but there—I know Harry is anxious to see you—so come and meet him.”

They went up stairs to where the sick man was in bed. By this time the radio had been cut out.

Dick and Janet did not very well remember their Uncle Harry, but he knew them and smiled at them as they entered his room behind their father and mother. Uncle Harry looked very ill.

“I’m glad to see you all—and the Wild Cherries, too,” he said in a low voice. “I hope the children will like it here,” he went on. “There isn’t much to do, but—”

“Could I help run the mill?” asked Dick, boldly; for he was interested in machinery.

“Why, yes, we need some help, I think,” answered his uncle.

“The children can run out and play now,” said Mrs. Cherry when they had been in the room a few minutes.

“Yes, only don’t go too far away, for supper will soon be ready,” advised Mrs. Kent. “And keep away from the mill race and the big water wheel.”

“Can’t we look at it?” asked Dick, anxiously.

“Yes, but be very careful!” warned his mother. “They both swim,” she added to her brother, “but I don’t want them tumbling in the first evening they’re here.”

“My foreman, Tim Gordon, will look after them,” said Mr. Kent. “He’s outside somewhere—probably shutting the water gates for the night.”

“Come on—let’s watch him!” proposed Dick to his sister.

“All right,” she agreed. “I’ll leave Ethel May in the house, ’cause I don’t want her to fall in the mill race,” she said. “What is a mill race, anyhow, Dick?” she asked, as they were going down stairs.

“It’s the place where the water runs from the dam into a long, wooden thing like a tunnel, only it hasn’t any roof,” explained Dick. “The water splashes over the wheel and turns it around.”

“I’d like to see it,” said Janet.

However, as it happened, the mill was shut down for the night, Tim, the foreman, just having closed the big wooden gate that stopped the water of the race, or flume, from splashing over the wheel. The water was turned aside and flowed down into the brook when it was not revolving the big moss-covered wheel. For Uncle Harry's mill was of the old-fashioned sort, with an over-shot wheel. He also had a small turbine wheel, much more powerful than the big wooden one, and this did some of the work of grinding grain.

As the children reached the mill they saw the foreman coming up from the flume, where he had let down the gate.

"Hello!" he called to them, cheerfully, for he had seen them in the house.

"Hello!" answered Dick and Janet, not at all shyly, for they liked the jolly face of Tim Gordon.

"You're the two Cherry children, aren't you?" went on the foreman.

"Yes," Janet answered.

"Wild Cherries they call us—sometimes." went on Dick with a smile.

"Wild or tame, I'm fond of cherries,"

laughed Tim. "And how do you like it here?" he asked.

"It's beautiful," murmured Janet, for in the golden, setting sun the old mill was a wonderful picture with water dripping from the green, mossy wheel that was now at rest.

"I'm going to help you run the mill," declared Dick.

"Good!" cried the foreman. "I guess we'll save it, after all."

"Save it?" repeated Dick. "Why—"

"Your uncle has been afraid that he'll lose his mill," went on the foreman. "You see it isn't all paid for, and he owes money on it. If he doesn't pay the money some men may take the mill away from him. But now with your father here to manage the mill, and with me to run it, I guess we'll take in enough cash to pay for the mortgage."

"And I'm going to help!" declared Dick.

"Sure you're going to help!" agreed Tim.

"And I will, too," added Janet.

"Pooh, girls can't work in a flour mill!" exclaimed Dick.

"They can so—can't they, Mr. Gordon?" appealed Janet.

“Sure they can—they can make out the bills!” chuckled the foreman. “But don’t call me Mr. Gordon,” he begged. Call me Tim—it’s more friendly like.”

So the Wild Cherries did.

They were shown about the mill by the foreman, who pointed out to them how the big wheel, outside, which was revolved by water from the flume splashing over it, turned the other wheels inside the mill, and moved the big grinding stones. Between these stones wheat and other grains were made into flour. Farmers brought their grains to Mr. Kent to have them ground, paying him for the work. Thus he was able to live and, he hoped in time, could pay off the mortgage on his mill.

Dick liked the machinery, but Janet did not care much for this. The mill was a queer, dusty old place, with cobwebs hanging from the whitened beams overhead. It was getting dark and silent now, for the machinery was shut down.

“But it will be a roaring place to-morrow,” said the foreman.

“That’s when I’m going to work!” declared Dick.

“And I’m going to make out the bills,” said Janet.

“You can’t write good enough!” scoffed her brother.

“I can so—I’ll show you! and the little girl shook her head very determinedly.

“We’ll see about it—we’ll see,” chuckled Tim.

Then Miss Lufkin, who was cook for Aunt Laura, called the children in to supper, and the foreman came also, for he lived with Uncle Harry.

Somewhat to Dick’s disappointment the mill was not started up next morning. The water gate of the flume was not opened, and the big wheel did not turn.

The reason for this was that there was no “grist,” as it was called, to grind. Besides, Uncle Harry thought it would be well for Mr. Cherry to go over matters with him before starting to manage the mill.

So, not having anything to look at in the mill, Dick and Janet decided to take a walk off in the woods or to the fields and hills that surrounded the home of their uncle and aunt.

“Don’t go too far away and get lost!” warned their mother, as they were leaving.

“No’m, we won’t!” promised Janet.

“And don’t try any of your wild tricks!” begged their father.

“No, sir, we won’t,” agreed Dick.

“They’ll be all right,” Aunt Laura remarked to the mother of the children. “They can’t get lost—the woods aren’t dense enough, and they can easily find their way back. If you follow the little river up into the hills it will take you into a pretty part of the country,” she concluded.

“We’ll do that,” decided Dick.

So, hand in hand, the Wild Cherries wandered up the hillside, down which splashed and twisted the little river that served to turn the mill wheel.

It was a pleasant day—their first one at Summer Hill—and Dick and Janet were ready for any sort of fun. On and on they wandered, now stopping to listen to some wild bird, now pausing to cast a stone into the stream and again halting to gather flowers.

At last they had climbed well up into the hills, following the stream which plunged down the steep grade with many a cascade and waterfall. Then they came out on a level place, and,

through the trees, they could see what seemed to be a small lake.

Not far away stood a lonely cabin—all by itself, and, seeing it, Janet whispered to her brother:

“Maybe we’d better not go too close!”

“Why not?” he asked.

“ ’Cause—maybe tramps live there—or Gipsies!”

“Oh, come on!” urged the boy. “I’m not afraid!”

But Janet hung back.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HERMIT

SILENT and still was the lonely cabin on top of the hill at the edge of the lake. No sign nor sound came from it—not even smoke from the chimney. Nor was there any other house or cabin near—the small shack of logs, with plaster in between the cracks, stood all by itself.

“I’m going to see who lives there,” insisted Dick.

“I’m not,” objected Janet. “It might be Gipsies.”

“What if ’tis?” demanded Dick. “We aren’t scared of Gipsies! Don’t we know Madame Deborah and Kobah?”

“Yes,” admitted Janet.

“Well, then, even if ’tis Gipsies in that cabin, we can tell ’em we know some other Gipsies and they’ll be friends with us.”

“Well—all right,” agreed Janet, after thinking it over.

Dick started toward the lonely cabin, and his sister followed for a little while, but, as they neared it, she looked anxiously toward the silent door and window, and murmured:

“S’posin’ ’t isn’t Gipsies?”

“What do you mean?” asked her brother.

“I mean s’posin’ it’s tramps? I don’t like tramps.”

“I don’t, either,” agreed Dick.

“And maybe it might be the same tramps we took Gassy away from,” went on Janet, speaking of something that had happened before, as I told you in the first book.

“Well, if it’s tramps, I don’t like them as well as I do Gipsies,” Dick admitted. “But, anyhow, I don’t guess there are any tramps there,” he went on, motioning toward the cabin. “If there was any tramps they’d be making a noise.”

“And cooking,” added Janet, joining in with her brother’s idea. “Tramps are always cooking and eating.”

“That’s right,” Dick declared. “And tramps don’t like to live in a house, ’specially in summer time. Henry Merton told me so. They like to camp out in the open and cook over a

fire. So maybe it's Gipsies in the cabin. Come on—let's look!"

Satisfied in her own mind, now, that there was no danger, Janet followed her brother. But, as they approached the lonely cabin something happened that startled them almost as much as if some ragged, bearded tramp had rushed out.

For from the open door of the log hut there rolled out a little automobile. It was not big enough to have held either Dick or Janet, and was a sort of toy machine. As the children watched, the toy auto rolled out, moved this way and that, backed up, went ahead again and then, turning a complete circle, swung in toward the cabin.

"Did you see that, Jan?" whispered Dick.

"Course I did. I guess maybe that's a toy shop where they make things for Christmas."

"Things for Christmas—what do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Well, didn't you see the toy auto? It came out and went back again. Somebody in there makes toys and they try 'em to see if they work right."

"Yes, maybe that's so," admitted Dick

slowly. "But that doesn't look like any toy shop—'t isn't big enough."

"Well, it is for a few toys," said Janet.

"And, anyhow, nobody would come here to buy things for Christmas," objected Dick.

"Well, maybe they wouldn't," admitted his sister. "Oh, but look, something else is coming out of the cabin, Dick!"

As she spoke and pointed, what seemed to be a small locomotive issued slowly from the log building. The toy engine rolled along on the ground—the Wild Cherries could see that there was no track—and then it came to a stop. A moment later a low, shrill whistle was heard.

"Oh, it's just like a real engine!" excitedly cried Dick. "I wonder what all this is? Jimminities, but I'm glad I came!"

"So'm I," admitted Janet, "but what does it all mean?"

As the puzzled children looked, they saw the toy locomotive start off again. It went forward a few feet and then, as the toy auto had done, it turned around and entered the shack, as if some one had pulled it in.

"Oh, did you see that!" whispered Janet.

"Sure I did," said her brother in a low voice.

“I—I’m getting scairt,” went on Janet, not using exactly the right word in her excitement. “I don’t want to stay here.”

“Oh, we got to see what all this is about!” declared Dick. “If any more queer things come out of that cabin—”

Almost as he spoke something else did come out. But it was not a toy. It was an old man, with white hair and a long, white beard.

“Oh, look!” gasped Janet. “He’s a hermit, I guess!”

Slowly the old man walked out toward the children.

CHAPTER IX

DANGER

DICK and Janet, who had started to walk toward the queer, lonely cabin, out of which had come the strange toys, halted as they saw the old man. Dick heard what his sister said.

“What’s a hermit?” asked the boy in a whisper.

Sometimes Janet knew things that Dick didn’t know. It was not very often that Dick would admit this, but now was a time.

“A hermit is a queer old man who lives all alone,” answered Janet, still in a low voice so the one who was approaching would not hear her.

“Does he do things?” Dick wanted to know.

“Yes—I guess he does—things,” answered Janet. She didn’t exactly know what a hermit did. In fact she knew very little about them. She had once seen a picture of an old man—something like the man from the cabin.

This picture was called "The Hermit," and by asking her mother questions, Janet had learned all she now knew about hermits—which wasn't much, to tell you the truth.

Not knowing what they ought to do, not knowing what the old man might be going to do—in fact just a little bit afraid the two Wild Cherries waited for what was next to happen. However they need not have been frightened.

For the aged man, with a kind smile which parted the bushy, white beard on his face, making it wave and flutter, called:

"Hello, children! Have you come to see me? I'm glad to see you! Come in and I'll show you many strange things."

The hermit, for such he might be called, seemed to know that Dick and Janet had been looking at and watching the toy auto and locomotive, which had run themselves back into the cabin. Taking heart because of the gentle voice and kind smile of the old man, Dick asked:

"Do you make Christmas presents?"

"And do you work for Santa Claus?" Janet wanted to know. In a way she was very fond of Santa Claus.

“Well, yes, you might say I make Christmas presents,” answered the old man. “I make toys more for myself, though, than for Santa Claus. But if he wants me to help him at any time, I shall be very happy to do so. If you will come in my workshop I’ll show you some more wonders.”

“How did you make that auto go?” asked Dick. “Did you pull it back by a string?”

“No, it didn’t work that way,” was the reply.

“Did you wind up a spring in it?” asked the boy. “I had that kind of a toy auto once, but it wouldn’t turn around and back up.”

“No, it doesn’t work by a wound-up spring, though there are springs inside the auto, and also inside the little locomotive,” said the old man. “You happened to come along just when I was trying them to see how they worked. I have been experimenting on them.”

Seeing, by the looks on their faces that the children did not know what this word meant, the hermit went on:

“That means I have been working on these toys so they will do some wonderful tricks. Though they move backward and forward

now, and turn around, I want them to be still better.”

“And do they do all that without being wound up and without you pulling a string?” asked Dick, who liked anything that had to do with machinery. “I don’t see what makes ’em go,” he added.

“I’ll tell you about it pretty soon,” said the man with another jolly smile. “Come in my workshop and see what else I have that Santa Claus might like.”

Dick looked at Janet and Janet looked at Dick. Would it be all right, they wondered, to go in the lonely shack of this hermit? He was not a Gipsy, that they could tell, and he was not a tramp. Who he was they did not know. But when Dick thought of those wonderful toys, which worked in a way he had never before seen toys work, the boy could resist no longer.

“I’m going in!” he said.

“Then I’m coming, too,” added Janet.

As if knowing that the children would come, the old man had turned and walked back toward his log cabin. The Wild Cherries followed him inside the door. Dick gave a gasp



“Here is something you may like, my little man,”
went on the hermit.

of delight as he peered into the room. Scattered about on a work-bench were many toys—mostly the kind that ran on wheels.

Besides these there were a number of queer machines, such as Dick had had a glimpse of, once, in the laboratory of the high school in Vernon. He had gone there to a little play with his mother, and she had let him peep into the room where the older boys and girls learned all about electricity and other forces of nature.

“Here is something you may like, my little man,” went on the hermit. He took down from a shelf a small motor boat which had some curious things on its deck. “I’m sorry I haven’t a walking, talking and sleeping doll for you to look at,” said the old man to Janet.

“Oh, I like boats, same as Dick does!” she made haste to say. “We went sailing on a raft once; didn’t we, Dick?”

“Sure we did,” he answered.

“Well if you like boys’ toys then you’ll like this, I think,” proceeded the hermit. “Come down to the little lake and I’ll show you how it works.”

“It’s a dandy boat all right!” murmured Dick, as he looked longer at the beautiful toy.

At the stern was a little propeller, just as on a real speed boat.

The old man carefully set the toy boat, which was about three feet long, in the water where it floated gracefully, gently bobbing up and down on the waves raised by the gentle summer breeze.

“Doesn’t it go?” asked Dick, for the boat did not move.

“Oh, yes, when I turn on the power,” answered the hermit. “I must do that from back in my work shop. You stay here and watch.”

Leaving Dick and Janet standing on the shore of the pond, the water from which turned the big mill wheel, the hermit went back to his shop. From it, presently, came strange buzzing and snapping sounds. Dick wondered where he had heard sounds like them before.

Suddenly, to the surprise of the children, the toy motor boat at which they were looking, began to move all by itself. It started out, slowly at first, and then ran swiftly, a hundred feet or more from the shore. Gradually it came to a stop, and began to reverse, or back up.

“Look at that, would you?” cried Dick.

Even as he spoke the boat shot off to the left. , Then it went to the right. Then it swung in circles, first one way and then the other. Lastly it turned about and headed back for the spot on shore where the children stood, coming to a stop not far from them.

And all this was done without any one being on board the boat, which might have held a small boy, and without the hermit going near it to wind the boat up or pull it by a string.

“Say, that was great!” cried Dick in wondering admiration. “How did you do it?” he asked as the hermit, smiling broadly, came out of the cabin.

“Come here and I’ll show you,” he said.

Giving a glance back toward the boat, to make sure it was not moving, Dick and Janet followed the old man into his wonder-shop.

“Now watch the boat,” he advised them.

Standing in the door of the cabin they could look down to the motor boat in the pond. And, as they watched, they had a glimpse of the old man turning handles, wheels and switches at one of the queer machines on his work bench. When he turned a handle one way the motor

boat shot ahead. When he turned the handle the other way, the boat backed up.

And, as he turned other handles, wheels and switches, the boat once more did as it had done when Dick and Janet were close to it.

The little craft went ahead, backed up, circled about, turned to the right or left and then, swinging completely around, came to the shore it had left.

“How do you do it without winding it up or pulling it by strings?” asked Dick, when the boat was at rest again.

“It is all done by wireless,” answered the old man. “You are too little to understand it now. But there is machinery in the boat, just as there was machinery in the toy auto and locomotive. I can start and stop that machinery by wireless waves, just as I can, from a long way off, have you listen to a song or story over the wireless telephone.”

“Oh, you mean Uncle Harry’s loud speaker?” asked Janet.

“Well, yes, something like that,” was the answer. “In fact I put in that loud speaker for your uncle.”

“Oh, do you know him?” asked Dick, with

a more friendly feeling toward the aged hermit.

“Oh, yes, I know him, and I can guess who you are—the Cherry children,” he went on.

“That’s who we are!” exclaimed Janet in delight.

“They call us the Wild Cherries—sometimes,” confessed Dick.

“Well, you haven’t acted very wild since you came here,” chuckled the hermit. “I have been hoping you would—it gets a bit dull here for me, all alone.”

“Doesn’t anybody live with you?” Janet wanted to know.

“No, I’m here all by myself. I am working on some new wireless radio machines. I try things first by these toys—the toy auto, locomotive and motor boat. Later on I may make a big auto that I can steer over the hills and far away.”

“You mean steer it over the hill and you stay here?” asked Dick.

“Yes, just as I steered and ran the motor boat in the water while I stayed on land. When you get older you will understand. Just now these are only toys to you.”

“We heard Uncle Harry’s loud speaker

when we came yesterday," said Janet, "and mother thought something had happened."

"Yes?" laughed the hermit. "Well, when I heard that your uncle was ill I asked him to let me put in a radio for him. I am glad to know it amuses him."

"Yes, it does," said Dick. "Uncle Harry is pretty sick."

"And he's afraid he's going to lose the mill," added Janet.

"That's too bad. How will he lose the mill?" asked the hermit.

"Somebody that he's got to pay money to may take the mill away if he doesn't pay," answered Dick. "But my father is going to run the mill."

"And I guess it will be all right," said Janet, who had great faith in her daddy, as was proper.

"Yes, I hope everything will come out all right," said the hermit, as he went down to the water to take out the model motor boat. "Now I don't want to send you children away, for I like to have you here," he went on when the boat had been put in the shack. "But if you stay too long your parents may worry."

“Can we come back again to-morrow?” asked Janet.

“Or this afternoon?” added her brother.

“Better make it to-morrow,” suggested the old man with a smile. “I am going away this afternoon.”

“Then we’ll come to-morrow,” promised Dick. “Are there any fish in this lake?” he asked, for he was fond of fishing.

“There may be some, I have never had time to try to catch any,” was the answer. “This is an artificial lake. That is, it was once a small pond, but a dam was built and the water, from springs and brooks in the hills all around, has gathered back of the dam, until there is quite a lake.”

“This water runs Uncle Harry’s mill,” said Dick.

“Yes, I know it does,” answered the hermit. “It runs the mill and some day it might sweep the mill away.”

“How?” asked Dick.

“I mean if there should come heavy rains, and there should be so much water gathered in this lake that it broke the dam, then the mill down below would be swept away,” the her-

mit said. "It is dangerous the way this dam is built. I have often told your uncle so."

"Dangerous?" murmured Dick.

"Yes; but as nothing has happened in many years, perhaps it never will happen. Come, I will show you the dam and the flood gates, and then you had better go home or your folks may worry."

Leading the children along a path beside the lake, the hermit pointed out where the dam was built—a thick wall of stones and cement, holding back the waters behind it. He also showed them where there was an opening in the dam through which the water ran down the hill and into the mill race, turning the big wheel.

"What's that other gate for?" asked Dick, pointing to a very large one at the other side of the dam.

"That is to open and let the waters out with a rush, down into the deep gulch or valley, in case the lake gets too high on account of too much rain," answered the hermit. "That gate is to save your uncle's mill from danger."

"How?" Dick wanted to know. He never could seem to hear enough about machinery.

"Well," went on the hermit, "in case the

water back of the dam became too high, and was in danger of bursting the stone wall, and sweeping down on the mill, if this gate were opened, the flood would rush down the gulch, where it could do no harm. For there are no mills or houses in the gulch."

"Does Uncle Harry know about this danger?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I suppose so," said the hermit. "I have heard him say that if ever the lake gets too high the flood gate must be opened to save his mill."

"Who would open the flood gate?" asked Janet, who thought she would like to see the foaming waters rush on their way down the gulch where they could do no harm.

"Oh, there is a watchman on guard, in that little house over there," and the hermit pointed to a small one the children had not, up to this time, noticed. "The watchman is supposed to be on guard in the time of big rains, and he would open the flood gate if there was danger."

"Then Uncle Harry's mill would be saved," said Dick.

"Yes, if the flood gate was opened in time," answered the hermit. "But now then, my

Wild Cherries, you had better hurry home—or to your uncle's house. Is he feeling any better?"

"I guess so—a little," said Janet.

"I didn't hear the mill running to-day," went on the old man.

"No, there wasn't anything to grind," answered Dick, who had heard Tim Gordon say this. "But it's going to grind to-morrow and my father is going to run the mill and I'm going to help him!"

"Good for you, little man!" laughed the hermit.

"And I'm going to make out the bills," added Janet with pride.

"That's fine!" said the old man. "Well, run along now!"

So Dick and Janet, saying good-bye, turned into the path that led down to the mill. And, as if to show that they could be wild when they wished, Dick and Janet turned somersaults down the grassy slope. Behind them they could hear the laughter of the old man.

When they were nearly at their uncle's house Janet turned to Dick and exclaimed:

"Oh, we forgot something!"

“What?”

“We forgot to ask his name. He asked ours—anyhow he knew our names—but we don’t know his!”

“That’s right,” agreed Dick, coming to a stop as he was about to jump over a big rock, “we don’t!”

CHAPTER X

THE SPRING TREE

THE two Wild Cherries were queer children. They did things other boys and girls wouldn't do, and they thought of things other boys and girls wouldn't think of. This was one of those times.

"We weren't very polite—not to ask him his name," went on Janet.

"No—that's right—we weren't," agreed Dick. "We could go back up there and ask him, though. Come on—let's—I'd like to see that auto run again."

"No," and Janet shook her head. "We ought to go back to Uncle Harry's house: Mother may worry. Anyhow, this old man knows Uncle Harry and Uncle Harry will know his name."

"Oh, yes, that's so!" cried Dick. "But, all the same, he'll think we weren't very polite not to ask him."

“We can appelergize next time we see him,” suggested Janet.

“Yes, that’s right. We can appelergize next time,” and Dick, satisfied with this way out of the trouble, jumped over the rock. Janet tried it, but she came to grief, falling in a heap when her foot caught in a tangle of weeds as she was about to jump.

“Are you hurt?” asked Dick, pausing and looking back. He didn’t run back to help his sister, deciding to wait and see if she really needed it. For Janet was almost as much of a boy as was Dick, and she didn’t cry for every little bump or bruise.

“No—I’m all right,” she bravely answered, and up she jumped.

Without further adventure the two Wild Cherries safely reached their uncle’s house. Their mother greeted them with:

“Well, where have you been—you two wild ones?”

“We saw a hermit!” gasped Janet.

“And you ought to see him make things go by wireless!” added Dick.

“What do they mean—a hermit?” inquired Mrs. Cherry of her sister-in-law.



"I think they must have met Señor Paletta," answered Aunt Laura with a smile.

"Señor Paletta—what an odd name!" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry.

"Yes, and he is an odd man," went on Mrs. Kent, who was working in the kitchen. "Some of the country people are afraid of him, but we like him, and he was very kind when he learned Harry was ill—in fact he put in the radio for us."

"That's what he said," went on Dick. "We forgot to ask him his name, but he knew ours and he ran the wireless motor boat for us on the lake and—"

"Were you out on the lake in a boat?" interrupted Mrs. Cherry.

"No, Mother, it was only a toy motor boat," explained Janet. "It wouldn't hardly hold us."

"I guess that's right," said Mrs. Kent. "I've heard stories about some wonderful toys that Señor Paletta has in his lonely cabin. I have never been up there, nor has Harry, for this hermit didn't come until after Harry was taken ill."

"Is he really a hermit?" asked Mrs. Cherry.

"Well, he lives all by himself, as hermits do,"

answered Mrs. Kent. "But he isn't a miser, or anything like that. As I say, some of the country people are afraid of him. They tell strange stories of queer lights and noises seen and heard around his cabin after dark. But I think it all has to do with his wireless work."

"He—he—now, he's an—*experiment!*" burst out Dick. "And he's going to show us a lot more things next time we go up."

"I suppose it's all right," spoke Mrs. Cherry, to her brother's wife.

"Oh, yes, Señor Paletta is some sort of a foreigner—an Italian or Spaniard, I guess, but he is all right. He'll see that the children don't get into danger."

"Well, if he can do that for very long at a time, he is quite a wonderful man," laughed Mrs. Cherry.

"Aunt Laura," asked Dick, later in the day, "do you know there is danger to the mill if the water in the lake gets too high and bursts the dam?"

"Oh, yes, that might happen," his aunt answered. "But there is a flood gate that could be opened to let the water out down the gulch, and that would save the mill."

“Yes,” went on Dick, “if the gate was opened it would save the mill. But s’posin’ somebody—the watchman I mean—didn’t open the gate?”

“Oh, he’s always there when a big storm comes, to open the gate and let the water back of the dam out where it will do no damage,” said Mrs. Kent. “If the watchman couldn’t, or didn’t, open the gate, some one else would have to do it. But don’t worry about danger, Dick. You came up here to have fun and you and Janet must play and enjoy yourselves.”

“Yes, we like it here,” said the boy.

He and his sister had lots of fun exploring around the old mill that day, and once Janet nearly slipped into the water, but Dick pulled her back in time.

The next day the mill was started, for there was corn and wheat to grind. Mr. Cherry and the foreman, Tim Gordon, with another man to help, started the big wheel moving, by opening a gate that let the water splash on its wooden paddles.

This big wheel turned a steel shaft, or axle and this axle turned other wheels inside the

mill. In their turn these wheels made the stone mill stones grind, and between the mill stones the wheat and corn was ground into fine powder, or flour and meal.

To his delight Dick was allowed to help his father in some light tasks about the mill, and Janet was taken into the office, where she put into envelopes the bills which those who had grist ground must pay.

"I'm a regular book keeper," Janet said with pride when she came in to lunch.

However much fun it was to "work" about the mill, the Wild Cherries did not want to do that all the time. So in the afternoon their father, seeing that they were lagging at the tasks he gave them, said:

"Come now, Wild Cherries, run out and play!"

"Don't you need us any more?" asked Dick.

"No, thank you! We shall be able to manage by ourselves for the rest of the afternoon, I think," answered his father.

"All right! Come on, Jan, we'll have some fun!" called Dick to his sister.

"Where you going?" she asked.

"Up and see the hermit—Señor Paletta," he

answered. "We'll appelergize for not asking his name."

"And maybe he'll run some more toys for us," added Janet.

"Maybe," agreed her brother, hopefully.

They made their way up the winding path that led to the dammed-up lake on top of the big hill. They did not stop, this time, to throw stones into the foaming brook dashing down the steep side of the hill, nor did they pause to gather flowers.

But, to their disappointment, when they reached the lone cabin, it was closed and the door was locked. There was no sign of the kind old hermit.

"He's gone," said Dick, when knocks on the door failed to bring an answer.

"Yes," agreed Janet. "Well, anyhow, we can have some fun up here. Let's go look at the danger-gate."

The children had given this name to the big wooden gate, or door, which could be raised up, by means of long levers, so the water back of the dam could rush out, doing no harm.

Over to the danger-gate went the Wild Cherries. They did not go too near, for the water

back of the dam was very deep. They looked at the gate house where, in times of heavy rain, a watchman was on duty night and day.

Then the two looked at the smaller gate beneath which rushed out the water that went down with a roar into the flume to turn the mill wheel. This gate was open all the while, and there was a strong current of water flowing beneath it.

Dick and Janet tossed in bits of wood and watched them being sucked down, swirling, twisting and turning in the foam-flecked current.

"If you fell in there you couldn't get out," said Dick to his sister.

"I'm not going to fall in," she told him.

Looking about for something else with which to amuse themselves, Dick and Janet saw a thin tree, growing back a little way from the edge of the lake.

"Oh, I know what we can do with that!" cried Dick.

"What?" asked his sister.

"It's a spring tree," and the boy pointed to the one he meant.

"What's a spring tree?" asked his sister.

“You climb up in, and when you’re near the top it bends over with you. Then you hold on and you can spring up and down like anything—a regular teeter-tauter!” cried Dick with sparkling eyes. “I’ll spring on it first and then it’ll be your turn.”

Accordingly he climbed up the sapling, or young tree, until, when near enough the top, it bent over with him. Holding on by his hands, Dick let the tree carry him down toward the ground, his weight bending it over in a graceful curve like a bow. Up and down sprang Dick, pushing himself upward by his feet, the tree helping by pulling him.

“Now it’s my turn on the spring tree!” cried Janet after a minute or two.

“All right,” assented her brother, kindly.

He “boosted” Janet up the tree, and, when she was near the top, she felt herself bending over, her weight bowing the tree as Dick’s had done.

But something went wrong. Janet’s hands slipped.

“Oh, I’m falling!” she cried.

But she did not fall. Her skirt caught on a broken, jagged branch of the little tree and,

a moment later, Dick saw his sister, hanging by her dress to the tree which went springing up and down, bobbing poor Janet between heaven and earth.

“Oh! Oh!” she cried. “Get me down, Dick! Get me down!”

But she was above Dick’s reach, for she was not heavy enough to bend the tree down far enough so her brother could reach her.

And there Janet hung!

CHAPTER XI

A WILD CHASE

DICK CHERRY was taken by surprise at Janet's plight. He expected her to do as he had done—grasp the top of the tree in both hands and teeter-tauter up and down, the sappling acting as a spring. But Janet had been caught by an accident. Her dress was fast to the tree.

"Dick! Dick!" she cried. "Can't you get me down?"

Dick was no coward, nor did he give up easily.

"Don't cry, Janet!" he called. "I'll help you!"

He had gone off a little way to see if he could catch a big bull frog after he had "boosted" Janet up into the tree. But, seeing his sister's plight, he had come running back.

At first Dick thought he could reach up and pull Janet down by her legs, for his weight, added to that of the little girl, would bend the tree over easily.

But Janet, in her terror, had so wound her

dress around the tree that she was held close to it. Neither her arms nor legs reached down near enough to the ground for Dick to grasp. And Dick knew that if Janet fell down on her back—as she might—she would be hurt. Should her dress tear loose and give way, she would plunge down hard and suddenly.

“Can’t you get yourself loose, Jan?” called Dick, standing under the tree on which his sister was bobbing up and down, like some animal caught in a spring trap.

“No, I can’t get loose,” she answered. “Oh, Dick, help me down!”

“I will if I can,” he answered. “If I was taller, or if I could stand on something, I could reach you,” he added.

“Look around, and maybe you can see something to stand on!” urged Janet.

Dick looked. There were plenty of old stumps scattered about, and if he could have stood on one of these he would have been tall enough to have reached his sister. But the stumps were too far away and were fast in the ground. Even a team of strong horses would have hard work to pull them out.

“Maybe you better run home and get daddy

or mother," suggested Janet, when it was certain that she was not soon going to get loose.

"No, I don't want to do that," Dick answered. "You might fall when I was gone." Then, with a new idea, Dick called: "Jiggle yourself and wiggle yourself, Jan. Maybe that will make your dress come loose and you'll fall while I'm here."

"Yes, but I don't want to fall!" she objected. "I want to come down easy."

"Well, I'll stand right under you and catch you," offered Dick, holding up his arms. "Go on—jiggle and wiggle and get your dress loose so you'll fall."

"Maybe I'll bump you!" warned Janet.

"I don't care," said Dick bravely enough. "Go on—jiggle!"

So Janet wiggled and jiggled herself, but it was of no use. Her dress was firmly caught and wound about a jagged, broken branch of the little tree. And the dress, being of stout material, did not tear.

"I can't do it!" sighed Jan, after several more jiggles and wiggles. "I can't fall!"

"Then if you're stuck there good and tight

I guess you won't fall if I run down to the mill and get help," said Dick.

"Oh—I don't like to stay here all alone!" sighed Janet.

"I'll be back soon as I can," promised her brother.

He was about to hurry away when Janet called:

"I hear somebody coming! Oh, Dick! Somebody's coming! Maybe it's daddy or mother!"

Dick listened. Coming through the clump of woods, on the edge of which stood the spring tree, he could hear some one approaching. There was the noise of rustling, dried leaves and the breaking of twigs under foot.

A moment later the children saw the hermit—Señor Paletta—coming toward them. The old inventor, in an instant, took in with a glance what had happened.

"Keep still!" he cried. "Don't move, little girl, and I'll get you down safe!"

A moment later he was standing beneath Janet, caught as she was on the sapling. Señor Paletta was tall enough easily to reach

up and raise Janet. This took the strain off her tangled dress and it was soon loosened. Then the hermit set her down, right side up, on the ground.

“Well, are you all right?” he asked.

“Oh—yes,” gasped Janet, who was feeling rather queer. She had almost been standing on her head, or, at least, hanging by her heels for several minutes, and her face was very red. “I—I’m all right now,” she said.

“Thank you,” added Dick, not forgetting his manners.

“Oh, yes—thank you,” went on Janet.

“And we’re sorry we didn’t ask your name the other day.”

“Ask my name!” repeated the old man in surprise.

“Yes, we weren’t very polite,” said Dick. “You knew our name, but we didn’t ask yours, and when we went back to your cabin you were gone and—”

“Oh, that’s all right!” chuckled the hermit. “I thought you knew my name—most folks around here do, though they aren’t very friendly, I must say.”

“My aunt says they’re sort of—now—afraid of you,” said Dick.

“How silly! Nonsense! It’s just that they don’t understand,” the inventor laughed. “It doesn’t matter. But say, what were you doing, tangled up in the tree the way you were?” he asked Janet.

“It was a spring tree,” explained Dick. “I went up first and I bobbed fine on it, but Janet got stuck.”

“I should say she did!” laughed the old man. “Well, at last I have seen the two Cherries rather wild,” and again he laughed.

“Have you got any more toys that work by wireless?” asked Dick, now that Janet was all right again.

“Yes, but they aren’t ready to show you now,” the inventor answered. “Come to see me in about a week.”

“We will,” promised the children as they said good-bye and watched Señor Paletta take a path that led to his cabin.

“What’ll we do now?” asked Dick, after a pause, during which he had again tried, without success, to catch the bull frog.

“Well, I’m not going up any more spring trees,” declared Janet.

“No, I guess they aren’t good for girls,” admitted her brother. “But say,” he went on, “I know where there’s an apple tree and it’s got some green apples on.”

“We shouldn’t eat green apples,” said Janet. “Mother told us that.”

“I guess a little one, or maybe two, won’t hurt,” proposed Dick. “Come on—I know where the tree grows.”

“Well, I’m not going to eat any green apples, but I’ll watch you eat,” said Janet.

This satisfied Dick and he led the way through the woods down toward some farms and orchards. There was one big field in which grew a lone apple tree. And Dick had seen, from a distance, green apples growing on this tree. He had been hungering for some of this forbidden fruit ever since he noted where it grew.

“Maybe whoever owns the tree doesn’t want you to go in and take the apples,” suggested Janet, when they had reached the place, and Dick started to crawl through the rail fence.

“Oh, I don’t guess they’ll care if I only take about two green apples,” he replied.

Janet watched him walk toward the tree. She saw him reach up and pick some apples from the low branches. Then a queer sound caused Janet to look off to the left.

Coming across the field, headed straight for the tree, was a big black bull, shaking his head, bellowing and tearing up the ground with his sharp hoofs.

“Oh, Dick, look out!” warned Janet.

Dick looked and saw the on-rushing bull. Dropping the apples he had picked, the boy started to run, but the bull, with a bellow of wild rage, came after him.

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” screamed Janet.

CHAPTER XII

GRUNTER THE PIG

JANET wished that she might do something to save her brother from the mad bull, as Dick had often helped her in times of trouble. For the Wild Cherries got into trouble very often, sometimes together and sometimes separately. Now it was Dick who was in danger.

“Oh, Dick! Dick! Run! Run!” screamed Janet.

And you may be sure Dick was doing just that very thing. He very wisely decided not to try to run across the field, to get on the other side of the fence. For, though Dick was a very good runner for a boy of his age, he could not run as fast as the bull—that he well knew.

So when he had started away from the apple tree, and then had seen the big, horned animal galloping toward him, the boy turned back to the apple tree as a place of shelter.

Dick ran around the apple tree, and the bull

also ran around the apple tree. But there was one thing that helped Dick. Being smaller than the bull he could turn more quickly and could swing in a smaller circle. And, by running around, close to the tree, Dick managed to keep out of the way of the bull's horns.

Telling about it, afterwards, Janet said:

"It was just like one of those funny pictures you see in the movies!"

"Huh!" exclaimed Dick. "I didn't feel very funny when the bull was chasing me!"

And you may be sure he did not.

However he was still in danger, though, for a time, he managed to keep ahead of the bull. Around and around the apple tree they raced, with Janet screaming in terror on the safe side of the fence. Dick was fast losing his breath. He did not know how much longer he could keep up the race.

Then Janet had a smart idea. She saw several low branches of the apple tree, not far above Dick's head. In fact they were so low that he had been able to reach up to them, and, without standing on his tip-toes, he had picked off apples. This gave Janet her clever idea.

"Dick! Dick!" she cried. "Grab hold of one

of the branches and pull yourself up in the tree! Then the bull can't get you! Bulls can't climb trees!"

Dick heard. He was too much out of breath to answer, but he knew what his sister had advised him to do. Just then he saw, a little way ahead of him, the lowest branch on the tree. The bull had slipped on a flat stone in the ground, and was almost thrown down. This gave the boy the very chance he needed.

Reaching up his arms, Dick caught the low branch in a firm grip. He swung himself up, pulling himself above the ground, his run helping him in the leap he made.

And, just as the bull managed to get on his feet again, and came rushing on, Dick pulled himself safely up so that he was out of danger when the bellowing animal, shaking his head and horns, rushed beneath him.

Dick was out of danger of one sort, but the bull was still loose and running around the tree. The Cherry boy would not dare to come down as long as the bull was there.

It took the animal nearly half a minute to discover that there was no one left to chase. He seemed surprised as he looked about and

could not see Dick. Very likely the bull wondered where that queer, racing boy had gone. "Why didn't he stay and let me toss him on my horns, or paw him with my feet?" the bull may have thought.

The animal did not seem to know enough to look up in the tree and see Dick. Bulls are stupid creatures. And, even if the bull had seen Dick in the tree, what good would it have done him?

As Janet had said, bulls can't climb trees.

However, seeing no one near the apple tree for him to chase, the bull stopped racing about and looked for some one else to frighten. He saw Janet on the other side of the fence and rushed for her.

"Look out!" shouted Dick, and he was wondering whether he had not better drop down out of the tree and throw stones at the bull to drive him away from Janet.

"Oh! Oh!" screamed Janet, as she saw the big animal coming toward her. She started to run away, but she need not have done that.

For the bull, after rushing toward the fence, came to a sudden stop very close to it. The fence, though made of split wooden rails, of

the kind Abraham Lincoln is said to have chopped out with an axe, had in it, also, strands of sharp, barbed wire. More than once the bull had tried to batter down this rail fence, only to be cut on the sharp points of the wire. So, in time, he had learned his lesson. No longer did he charge at fences.

So it was the thought that he might get hurt if he tried to toss Janet on his horns that made the bull stop. There he stood, however, pawing the ground, shaking his big head and even digging his short, sharp and powerful horns into the earth.

"You're all right, Janet! He won't hurt you now! He's afraid of the barbed wire!" shouted Dick from his tree.

At the sound of the boy's voice the bull turned. He knew, now, what had become of that funny chap he had been chasing. With a bellow and grunt, the powerful animal turned and charged back again toward the tree.

He was going so fast that he could not stop, and with head down, as all bulls charge, he rammed the trunk of the apple tree, jarring and shaking it.

“Oh, he’s trying to jiggle you down, Dick!” cried Janet.

“Well, I’m going to hold on tight, so he can’t!” her brother replied.

I do not believe the bull really was trying to hit the tree and shake it to make Dick fall. Bulls don’t know enough for that. He was merely going so fast that he couldn’t stop until he hit the tree. And it didn’t hurt him much, for his head was very strong.

The bull didn’t know what to do, now. He couldn’t seem to find any one to toss with horns or trample on. It was no fun to butt a tree.

So the big farm animal walked slowly to and fro, now toward the fence, on the other side of which was Janet, and now toward the tree, in which Dick was still clinging.

“Do you s’pose he’ll ever go away so you can come down, Dick?” asked Janet, after a while.

“I don’t know,” was the answer.

“Maybe I better go and tell daddy,” suggested the little girl.

“Well, maybe you had,” agreed Dick. “I don’t want to stay up here all night.”

But as Janet was about to leave, she and Dick heard shouts across the field and, looking

in that direction, they saw some men and a dog running toward them. The men had pitchforks in their hands and they were the farmer and his helper coming after the bull.

"Is anybody hurt? Did my bull horn anybody?" anxiously cried the farmer, as he drew near and saw Janet at the fence.

"No, sir! He didn't hurt me," she answered. "He ran for me but he stopped. He's got my brother up in the tree, though!"

"Oh, up in the tree, is he?" asked the farmer. "Well, that's a good place to be when a bull comes after you. We'll soon put Nero back where he belongs, however. Ah, you bad chap! Chasing little children, are you?" and the farmer shook his sharp pitchfork at the bull, while the dog barked. The bull did not seem so angry now. Perhaps he was sorry he had acted so unpleasantly toward Dick and Janet.

"He got out of his pasture," the farmer explained, "and we've been looking for him. Some one said they saw him head this way and we came after him. Now, Nero," he called "you get back where you belong! Behave yourself!"

Driven by the men, who were not afraid of the bull because they had pitchforks to stick him if he turned on them, the animal was headed down the field. The dog nipped at his heels and barked at him. Altogether it was too much for Nero. Besides, he was tired from his racing about.

"It's all right now, my boy. You can climb down out of the tree," the farmer called back to Dick, when the bull was far away.

"Thank you," Dick answered.

Then he swung himself down, ran over and crawled through the fence on the other side of which stood Janet. The two Wild Cherries looked at the bull being taken back to his pasture.

"That was a big adventure, wasn't it?" asked Janet.

"It sure was!" agreed her brother. He started back toward the field he had just left.

"Where you going?" asked Janet.

"I'm going back and get my apples," Dick replied. "I dropped 'em when the bull chased me. I can get 'em now!"

Dick was like that—he didn't give up easily.

"Oh—all right," agreed Janet, for she could

see that the bull was now far enough off to make it safe. The farmer's men were mending the broken place in the fence where the bull had gotten in.

So Dick got his apples after all. But he did not eat even one. For, after taking a few bites, he found the fruit so very green and sour that he did not like it. He was going to toss the apples away when he and Janet reached a field in which Uncle Harry kept some pigs.

The pigs were allowed to roam about a field, and in one corner was a shelter of boards where the animals slept at night. Dick had drawn back his hand, to toss away his apples, when he saw the pigs.

"I'll give 'em to Grunter," he decided. He and Janet had given the name Grunter to the largest of the pigs; a big, fat lazy chap who was quite tame.

"Uff! Uff!" rumbled Grunter, rooting with his rubber-like nose in the dirt. Then he smelled the apples which Dick tossed to him over the fence. "Uff! Uff!" he grunted again, as if saying: "Thanks! Thanks!"

"Do green apples hurt pigs?" Janet wanted to know.

“Course not!” answered Dick. “Pigs can eat anything, same as goats!”

Then, as he looked at the broad back of Grunter, Dick went on:

“Oh, I know how we can have lots of fun! We’ll make Grunter give us a ride!”

Janet looked at her brother. Then she shook her head.

“I’m not going to ride on a pig’s back!” she cried. “Never! You can ride on a pig’s back if you want to, but I’m not!”

She started to run away.

“Wait a minute!” called Dick.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UPSET IN THE MUD

JANET walked slowly back to where her brother stood looking at Grunter and the other pigs. By this time Grunter had eaten all the green apples that Dick had thrown to him. The other pigs, none as large as Grunter, however, had come up, sniffing the feast.

“Uff! Uff!” rumbled Grunter, shoving them away, and rooting in the earth for more apples. They were all eaten, however.

“What do you want, Dick?” asked Janet.

“I want to tell you how we can have some fun,” he answered. “We’ll have a ride with Grunter and—”

“No! No! I’m not going to, I tell you! I’m not going to get on Grunter’s back!” exclaimed Janet. “You think I want to fall off a pig?” she asked indignantly.

“Nobody asked you to fall off a pig!” said Dick.

“Well, you want me to get *on* one, and if I get on Grunter’s back I know I’ll fall *off*—he’s so *slippery*,” and Janet shook her head again.

“I’m not asking you to get on Grunter’s back,” and Dick started to climb the fence into the pig pasture.

“What do you mean then?”

“I mean we can make a little cart and hitch Grunter to it. He’s terrible strong and he could pull us fine. He’s real tame, too. Watch me scratch his back.”

The other pigs ran away when Dick leaped into the pasture, but Grunter stood there, looking at the boy out of his funny little eyes, and mumbling:

“Uff! Uff! Uff!”

Perhaps Grunter thought Dick had more apples to feed him, and so he stood waiting. At any rate he did not run away, and when Dick, with a piece of wood, reached over and scratched the pig’s back, Grunter seemed to like it very much.

“Isn’t he funny!” laughed Janet. “Is that how you make him pull a wagon, Dick; by scratching his back?”

"No, I don't guess so," the boy answered. "He'll only stand still when you scratch him. But if he gives us a nice ride I'll give him a good lot of scratches afterward. Now come on, Jan, and we'll make that express wagon and hitch the pig to it."

"Will Uncle Harry let you?" Janet wanted to know as her brother climbed the fence again.

"Oh, I guess so," he replied.

"And have you got to make a wagon?"

"Yes, but that's easy," said Dick. "I saw some wheels and a box in the mill. I can make a wagon all right."

"And do you think Grunter will pull us?" Janet wanted to know.

"Sure he will, when I get him harnessed up."

"We could get him some green apples to feed him, and then he'd pull us," Janet advised.

"Sure! That's a good thing!" declared Dick.

The children hurried home. Their first act was to tell their mother about the bull, for they always related their adventures to her, even when they had done wrong and gotten into trouble. Of course this time it was not their fault that the bull chased Dick.

“But, my dears, you must be careful,” said Mrs. Cherry, when she had heard the story.

“Yes’m, we will,” they promised.

But were they?

We shall see.

Work at the grist mill was now going on well, with Mr. Cherry to manage it in place of Uncle Harry. The foreman, Tim Gordon, helped all he could.

“I think we shall get money enough to save the mill,” said Aunt Laura. “But I do wish Harry would get better,” and she sighed.

Indeed Mr. Kent was very ill, and when the doctor came to see him he shook his head and said:

“We must hope for the best. He still has a good chance.”

“Oh, don’t you worry!” and the sick man smiled, though he was in much pain. “I’m going to get better all right!”

“That’s the best way to talk,” said Dr. Hardy.

Dick and Janet felt sorry for Uncle Harry, but their mother did not want them to worry too much and so she did not tell them how very ill Mr. Kent was.

So it happened that the two Wild Cherries had more time to go about and play by themselves, with no one to watch them, than, otherwise, would have been the case. For Daddy Cherry was busy in the mill, and Mother Cherry was busy in the house, helping Aunt Laura.

Thus when Dick asked Tim Gordon for the old box and some wheels from a broken baby carriage, the foreman said:

“Take ’em and welcome. I suppose you’ll be building an aëroplane out of ’em!” And he walked away laughing, for he liked the children and he had seen Dick make some toys out of odds and ends around the place.

“Dick, if you can’t make the express wagon for Grunter to draw us in, the hermit will help us, maybe,” suggested Janet, as her brother was trying to fasten the wheels to the box.

“Oh, I can do it,” he declared. “I guess Señor Paletta is too busy with his wireless to bother with us.”

“Are you ever going up there to see him again?” asked Janet.

“Sure we are—maybe to-morrow,” her brother answered. “He said maybe he’d

make me a little wireless all for myself.”

“That’ll be lovely!” murmured the little girl. “And I’ll let Ethel May listen in on it.”

“Pooh! A rag doll can’t hear wireless, or anything else!” scoffed Dick.

“She can so—make-believe—smarty!” retorted Janet.

“Oh—yes—make-believe,” admitted Dick. “Now hold that wheel still till I get it fastened on,” he directed. He would have made much more fun of the idea of Janet’s doll listening to the wireless, only Dick didn’t want his sister to get angry and run away before he had finished making the wagon. He needed her to help him.

At last it was finished. Not a very fancy wagon was it, but, as Dick said, you could sit in it and the wheels went around. It had quite a wobbly motion, for the wheels were of different sizes. And the wagon creaked and squeaked as Dick and Janet sat in it to try it. But it held them, and that was, as Dick said, something.

“Now we’ll hitch it to Grunter and have a ride,” he decided.

This was three days after the bull had chased

Dick, for it took him and his sister all that time to make the little wagon.

“Are you going to get some apples to feed the pig to make him go?” asked Janet.

“I guess we’d better,” decided her brother. “We’ll get them first. Then we’ll have a lot of fun.”

They drew the home-made cart to the edge of the pig pasture, and, leaving it there, went to the place of the lone apple tree. A careful look over the field showed that the coast was clear. The bull was not in sight. In a few minutes Dick had filled his pockets with green apples.

Back to where Grunter grunted, with his pig friends, hurried the two Wild Cherries.

“How you going to get the wagon over the fence?” asked Janet.

“We’ll take down some of the rails,” Dick replied.

The pigs were kept in a pasture with an ordinary “snake” fence around it—that is, the fence zig-zagged back and forth as a snake wiggles when he travels. And the pasture was so large, and the pigs had so much to eat there, in the shape of grass and weeds, that they did

not wander away, though they might have done so. It takes a very strong and tight fence to keep pigs in a pasture if they do not want to stay.

So Uncle Harry's pigs were not wanderers, but remained in one big field, sleeping at night under the shelter of the boards. It was easy for Dick and Janet to take down some of the fence rails, and make a place through which they could haul their little wagon.

"Here, Grunter! Grunter!" called Dick, tossing a green apple toward the big hog.

"Uff! Uff!" the fat creature rumbled, wrinkling his rubbery nose. He came toward the children, while the other pigs, somewhat afraid, it seemed, ran away. Grunter liked apples, even though they were green, and he was soon chewing the one Dick had tossed him.

"Now we'll harness him up while he's eating," said Dick to his sister.

"You better give him another apple, 'cause he's got that one 'most eaten up," advised Janet.

"I will," said Dick, and he did.

By keeping Grunter busy eating apples, Dick and his sister managed to tie around the pig's

neck a rope, the other ends of which were made fast to their little wagon.

"How you going to drive him—you haven't any lines like the farmers have on their horses?" asked Janet, when the harnessing was finished.

"I don't guess I can drive him—I got to let him go wherever he wants to," replied Dick. "I'll get in the wagon now, and you get in behind me. But hand me that stick, first."

"What's the stick for?" Janet asked as she handed it to her brother, who was already in the little cart.

"That's to scratch Grunter's back with and make him feel happy."

"Oh," said Janet, laughing.

The two Wild Cherries took their places in the cart. By this time Grunter had eaten all the apples Dick had tossed on the ground.

"Uff! Uff!" mumbled the pig, looking up with his funny eyes.

"Go on! Gid-dap!" cried Dick.

But Grunter did not move.

"He doesn't gid-dap very good, does he?" asked Janet.

"Not yet, but I'll make him," Dick answered.

He tossed another green apple on the ground in front of, and some distance away from, the pig. Grunter either saw or smelled it (for pigs have good noses for smelling) and off he started on a slow run.

“Oh, now he’s gidding-ap!” cried Janet.
“He’s gidding-ap fine!”

“He’s going good!” declared her brother.

Grunter reached the apple and to get it stopped so suddenly that the cart ran on and bumped his fat hind legs.

“Uff! Uff!” grunted the pig in surprise. This seemed to be the first he knew that he was pulling a cart and giving the children a ride. Quickly he chewed up the apple, while the other pigs looked on, as if wondering what in the world their companion was doing.

“Throw him another apple and make him gid-dap some more!” urged Janet.

Dick did so. Once again the pig ran slowly on, dragging the little wagon. The children laughed. They were having a jolly good time, for the ground in the pasture was smooth and the cart, though it wobbled a bit and jolted them about, did not fall apart. Dick was afraid this might happen, as he could only find

some rusty and crooked nails with which to fasten it together.

At last, however, something happened.

Dick had thrown another apple ahead of Grunter, to make him run toward it. It was only in this way that he could make the pig go. But one of the other hogs smelled the fruit and wanted it. He made a rush for it and, being nearer to it than was Grunter, took it away, almost from beneath Grunter's very nose.

"Uff! Uff!" grunted the harnessed pig, and this time his voice was angry.

Away he raced after the hog who had taken his apple.

"Oh, he's gid-dapping fast now!" cried Janet, holding to the sides of the cart.

"Yes—too—too—too fast!" gasped Dick.

"Oh, look where he's taking us!" suddenly cried the little girl. "He's going right for the mud-puddle!"

The pig who had stolen the apple was racing toward a corner of the field where there was a regular hog-wallow—a low swampy place, filled with black mud and water. Pigs love to lie in mud and water to cool off and keep the flies away.

After the pig who had taken his apple raced Grunter. Into the mud went the first pig. Into the mud went Grunter. And then, before they could jump out, into the mud went Dick and Janet.

As the wheels of the cart reached the edge of the hog-wallow, it upset and, a moment later, into the muck splashed the two Wild Cherries!

CHAPTER XIV

A WOODLAND PICNIC

LUCKY it was for Dick and Janet that they splashed into the mud sitting down, instead of head first. But that was about the only good part of their adventure with Grunter the pig.

Grunter kept on after the pig which had taken his apple. And, wallowing through the mud, grunting, twisting and turning, Grunter soon pulled himself free of the little cart, to which he had only been tied by a rope.

For a few moments after they had been pitched into the pigs' mud-puddle, neither Dick nor Janet said a word. They were too much surprised. Then as Janet looked about her, and saw how muddy she was, and how muddy Dick was, she gasped:

“Oh, what will mother say?”

“I—I—now—I guess she won't like it,” murmured Dick, pulling one of his hands out of a muck hole.

“I don't guess she will, neither,” remarked

Janet. "Oh, Dick," and there was the sound of tears in her voice, "how am I *ever* going to get clean?"

"I—I guess we'll have to go swimming in the mill creek," the boy answered. "We can go right in with our clothes on and that will wash off the dirt."

"Yes, I guess it will," agreed Janet. "What made Grunter gid-dap so fast?" she wanted to know, for, sitting behind Dick in the cart, she had not seen all that happened.

"Grunter chased another pig that took his apple," explained the Cherry boy. "I couldn't steer him, and he ran into this puddle and upset us."

"Grunter's a bad pig!" declared Janet.

"Oh, I don't think he did it on purpose," stated Dick. "I guess pigs don't mind going in the mud."

"Well, I don't like it," said Janet.

Slowly she crawled out of the hog-wallow. Slowly Dick followed. The little cart was lying on its side in a deeper part of the mud. One of the wheels had come off.

"Are you going to wade in and get it?" asked Dick's sister.

"No, I guess not," he answered. "If I want it I can get a pole and shove it out. But I don't guess we'll ride in it again."

"I'm not—anyhow!" declared Janet. "I—now—I might just as well have got a ride on Grunter's back as this way," she said. "And it's all your fault, Dick Cherry, making me muddy—like this!"

There were tears in her eyes as she looked at her soiled clothes.

"Aw, don't be a baby and cry!" urged the boy. "We'll go over in the mill brook and get all washed off. I was going in swimming, anyhow. Now we can go in with our clothes on. It's easier!"

"Yes, I guess it is," sniffed Janet, wiping away a tear or two. Rather she started to wipe them away, and when she saw how dirty were her hands, she didn't want to touch them to her face, which had only a few splashes of mud on it. So she let the tears run down her cheeks and drop off—just two tears. Then she didn't cry any more.

"We got old clothes on, anyhow," comforted Dick. "They been wet lots of times and had mud on them."

"Yes, I guess so," agreed Janet, with a final sniff.

Sorry sights, indeed, were the two Wild Cherries as they came out of the pigs' pasture. But it might have been worse. They might have been pitched into the mud-puddle head first, instead of sitting down in it. There was something to be thankful for, anyhow.

After the water, coming down the hill from the lake, where it was dammed up, had turned the moss-grown mill wheel, it flowed into a brook, and it was in this brook that Dick and Janet had decided to wash themselves

Dick found a calm, still pool, with a silvery-sand bottom and, wading in fully dressed, he and his sister splashed about until they were quite clean again, for the water soon washed off the mud.

"Now we'll sit in the sun and get dry," decided Dick, "and when we go home they won't hardly know anything happened."

"But we got to tell mother, haven't we?" Janet wanted to know.

"Oh, sure we have!" said Dick, decidedly.

"Oh, my poor, dear little Wild Cherries!" cried their mother, when she saw the somewhat

forlorn figures coming up the walk. "You fell in the brook, didn't you?" she asked, for she could see, by their partly dry clothing, that they had been in the water.

"No'm, we didn't ezactly *fall* in," said Janet, truthfully enough.

"We went in on purpose," added Dick.

"On *purpose!* Oh, you shouldn't have done that!" cried Mrs. Cherry.

"Well, we had to so we could get the mud off," went on Dick.

"What mud?"

"The mud from the hog-wallow. Grunter threw us in!"

"What—that pig? Oh, you shouldn't have gone near him. First it's a bull and then it's a pig! Why, you have more adventures in the country than you do in the city!" cried Mother Cherry. "How did Grunter get you in the mud?" she asked.

"Well," slowly answered Dick, "I hitched him to a cart and—"

You should have heard Mrs. Cherry laugh when she had listened to the whole story! And Daddy Cherry laughed, and so did Aunt Laura, and Miss Lufkin, and Tim Gordon;

and even Uncle Harry, though he was in great pain, could not help smiling when he heard what had happened to the Wild Cherries.

"I wish I could be up and about," he said to his wife. "I could have a lot of fun with those youngsters!"

"Well, you'll soon be up, I hope," said Mrs. Kent. "It's a good thing the Cherries could come here to help us run the mill, even if Dick and Janet do splash into the mud once in a while."

"Yes," agreed her husband, "the Cherries will save the mill for us, I believe. I only hope the dam holds."

"Why, is there any danger from that?" asked his wife.

"Well, Señor Paletta was in here yesterday, to fix the wireless for me, so I could hear a concert from WJZ in New York," went on Uncle Harry. "And he said if a big rain came, and there was a flood, the dam might give way if the flood gate wasn't opened in time."

"But it always has been opened," said Mrs. Kent. "Don't worry about that. I'm sure the mill will be all right."

"I hope so," murmured her husband as he turned over on his side to rest his aching back.

Two days after this Mrs. Cherry said:

"Dick and Janet, I'm afraid I have been leaving you wild ones too much alone since you came up here."

"Oh, Mother, we've been having lots of fun!" cried Dick.

"Yes, perhaps you have, but you have been getting into mischief, also. Now I must be with you more. Uncle Harry is a little better, so I am going to give you a treat."

"Oh, Mother, what?" asked Janet, her eyes sparkling.

"We'll have a little woodland picnic, we three," was the answer. "We'll pack lunch in a basket and go off in the forest."

"And pretend we're Gipsies!" murmured Janet.

"Yes, if you like," said her mother.

So they got ready for the woodland picnic, little dreaming what a strange adventure was to happen them.

CHAPTER XV

THE HAIRY PAW

“Now, children,” said Mother Cherry, when the lunch basket had been packed, and they were ready to start, “I shall let you find the place for the woodland picnic.”

“You mean you want us to take you to the best place?” asked Dick.

“Yes,” answered his mother.

“We know lots of nice places, don’t we, Dick?” asked Janet.

“Sure we do,” he replied.

“That’s what I thought,” went on Mrs. Cherry. “You two wild ones have been roaming for many days over the woods and fields all by yourselves, and you must have discovered many lovely places for picnics. Now you may take me to one.”

“Come on!” cried Janet in delight. “We’ll take her to the elephant tree, Dick.”

“Oh, I think the monkey rock would be better,” said Dick.

Mother Cherry looked at the two children in surprise. Both Dick and Janet seemed very much in earnest.

“What do you mean by the elephant tree and the monkey rock?” asked Mrs. Cherry. “I’m not quite sure I want to go on a woodland picnic if there are elephants and monkeys roaming in the forest.”

“Oh, Mother! It isn’t anything like that!” laughed Janet. “The elephant tree is just a big one that looks like an elephant with his trunk stuck out! It’s just a *make-believe!*”

“Oh, I see!” and Mrs. Cherry smiled. “Well, I suppose all trees are like elephants, aren’t they?”

“Oh, no, Mother! Of course not!” Janet exclaimed.

“Well, an elephant has a trunk and all trees have trunks,” and Mrs. Cherry pretended to be very much in earnest.

“Ha! Ha! That’s a ‘joke!’” laughed Dick. “And a good joke, too! I’m going to tell Tim Gordon about it.”

“But what is the monkey rock?” went on Mrs. Cherry, as she and the children started

off on the path that led over the hill and to the woods.

“The monkey rock is another make-believe,” said Dick. “It’s just a big rock that looks like a monkey, and there’s a good spring of water near it.”

“Well, it is always wise to have a picnic near where you can get a drink of water,” decided Mrs. Cherry, “so I should say that the monkey rock would be best.”

“But there’s a spring near the elephant tree, too,” went on Janet.

“Is there? Well then,” said Mrs. Cherry, “suppose we spend part of our picnic time at the elephant tree and the other part at the monkey rock.”

“That’ll be dandy!” exclaimed Dick.

“Just right,” agreed his sister.

So off to the woods they went. On the way Dick paused to pick up stones to throw at big rocks and other marks, for he wanted to see how straight a shot he was. Janet paused to pick flowers, pinning a small bunch of them on her rag doll, Ethel May. At last Janet picked a yellow buttercup and, holding it under Ethel May’s cloth chin, said:

"I must see if you like butter, my dear."

"Pooh! How can a rag doll like butter?" asked Dick.

"She can so like butter! Can't she, Mother?" appealed Janet. "And can't Dick stop making fun of Ethel May?" she asked.

"Yes, dear, don't make fun of your sister's playthings any more than you would want her to make fun of yours," said Mrs. Cherry.

"I could make a lot of fun of your old pig wagon if I wanted to," Janet went on. "Your pig wagon spilled us both in the mud!"

"That was 'cause Grunter ran away," explained Dick.

"Well, never mind," soothed Mrs. Cherry. "That is over and done with. We must be kind and cheerful to-day. Remember I have never seen the elephant tree or the monkey rock, and I expect you two Wild Cherries to show me all the wonders you have discovered."

This made Dick and Janet forget their own little dispute, and with smiles they hastened onward.

"Mother'll be surprised at the elephant tree, won't she, Dick?" asked his sister.

“She sure will,” he answered. “And at the monkey rock too!”

“Oh, yes!” agreed Janet.

The sun was shining warm and golden in the forest, the wind was blowing gently, stirring the leaves with a pleasant rustle, the birds were singing and there was a spicy smell of flowers in the air.

All in all it was a most wonderful day for a woodland picnic, and the children and their mother were ready to enjoy it to the utmost. In the basket was a fine lunch, put up by Miss Lufkin, who was almost as good a cook, Janet said, as was their own Jane at home.

“Now we’re coming to the elephant tree,” called the little girl, after about a quarter of an hour’s walk along the path. “Let me show it to her, Dick, please,” she begged.

“All right,” he agreed. “And I’ll show her the monkey rock when we get to that.”

Taking the lead, Janet ran on ahead until she reached a certain spot. Then she paused and motioned with her hand for her mother to come on.

“Stand right here and look,” directed Janet,

pointing. Mrs. Cherry did so. At first she could make out nothing but a lot of trees and bushes, but when Janet told her to look at a trailing vine, and then at a certain oak tree, the mother of the Wild Cherries exclaimed:

“Oh, I see! Yes, indeed, it does look exactly like a big elephant standing there! Who discovered it?”

“I did,” announced Janet, a bit proudly. “And now we’ll eat our lunch there.”

Soon they were sitting on a large, low rock, near a big, flat stump that served for a table. On this stump-table Mrs. Cherry spread out the sandwiches and cake, and poured out some glasses of milk for the children.

“We can have water to drink, too,” said Janet, pointing to the little bubbling spring.

“Well if this picnic is like all others I’ve been on,” said Mrs. Cherry, “You’ll want to drink milk and water too.”

“Picnics always make you hungry and thirsty,” observed Dick, as he reached for another sandwich.

Half the lunch was eaten beneath the elephant tree, and then the children played about, paying more than one visit to the spring to

get drinks, as Mrs. Cherry had thought they would. Mrs. Cherry read the children a story, and then she saw some butterflies and bugs about which she talked to Dick and Janet. For Mrs. Cherry was a lover of nature, and knew much about the crawling, creeping, running and flying creatures of the woods.

“Now let’s go to monkey rock,” proposed Dick, after a while. “We can eat the rest of the lunch there.”

“Are you hungry so soon again?” his mother wanted to know.

“Well, yes, I guess so,” he admitted. “Anyhow I will be when we get to monkey rock.”

“Is it far from here?” asked Mrs. Cherry. She would have been content to rest for a longer time in that lovely spot, beneath the elephant tree, but she had promised Dick his share in pointing out the wonders of the day, and she did not want him disappointed.

“Oh, it isn’t so very far,” the boy answered. “We can go slow.”

They started off, but Janet turned back with a cry.

“I almost forgot Ethel May,” she said, and, running back, the little girl picked up her rag

doll from a bed of moss where she had been put to sleep.

“Well, I’m not going to forget the lunch basket,” laughed Dick, for he had a firm grasp of the handle.

When the little picnic party reached a certain point in the path, Dick turned back and said:

“Now it’s my turn to show mother the monkey rock.”

“All right,” agreed his sister.

Holding aside a bush that grew out across the path, Dick motioned for his mother to come on and take a look. This she did, and almost at once she saw the outline of a big monkey, carved by nature in a fantastic rock that jutted out on the side of a little glen. Down the glen ran a babbling brook from the spring of which Dick had spoken.

“Doesn’t it look just like a monkey?” asked the little boy, turning to his mother.

“It surely does!” she answered with a laugh. “You are two clever children to discover such things as these—an elephant tree and a monkey rock—quite wonderful!”

“Maybe if we looked we could find a lion rock or a tiger bush,” suggested Janet.

“Well, we got to eat now,” said Dick, at which remark his mother laughed.

The picnic place at monkey rock was fully as pretty as the one at elephant tree, except that the table was a large flat rock, instead of a stump. But, as Dick said, the things tasted just as good off the rock as off the stump.

The last of the sandwiches had been eaten, and even the crumbs of cake were picked up by the birds, when Janet, taking Ethel May in her arms, walked down to where the spring bubbled into a basin of rock.

“What are you going to do—let your doll swim?” asked Dick.

“No, I’m going to give her a drink of water,” Janet answered.

“Pooh,” Dick started off with. “A rag doll can’t—”

“Dick, my dear,” warned his mother in a gentle voice, and he did not finish what he was going to say.

Janet walked to the edge of the little rocky

pool. Her mother and Dick saw her put Ethel May down on the ground. Then Janet began making a cup out of a green leaf.

Suddenly Janet gave a scream, and Mrs. Cherry, who had looked the other way for a moment, thought her little girl had fallen in the spring. But when she glanced back she saw Janet standing there safe.

Then Janet, waving her hands and screaming, came running up the slope. She seemed much frightened.

“Pooh! I guess she got scared of a bull frog!” joked Dick.

But Janet cried:

“It’s got Ethel May! It took Ethel May! Oh! Oh!”

“Who did? Who took your doll?” cried Mrs. Cherry.

“A big, long hairy paw!” answered Janet. “A big, long hairy paw—a regular monkey’s paw reached out of the bushes and took Ethel May!”

CHAPTER XVI

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

JANET ran, screaming and crying, into her mother's outstretched and waiting arms. Dick, who had been packing the empty plates and other dishes into the picnic basket, looked at his sister in surprise.

"Hey, what's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, it was a hairy paw! A monkey's hairy paw reached out and took Ethel May!" sobbed Janet.

There was a look of surprise on the face of Mrs. Cherry. She raised Janet's head, from where it was bowed down in her arms, and said:

"Janet dear, is this a play—is it make-believe?" For she knew the children often had fun this way.

"Oh, no, Mother! It isn't *make-believe* at all!" gasped Janet. "It's *real*!"

"Do you mean a *real* monkey?" asked Dick, his eyes opening wide with wonder.

"Course I do!" declared his sister. "A real monkey's hairy paw! It reached out through the bushes when I was getting Ethel May a drink, and the paw took my doll! Oh, Mother, do you s'pose I'll ever get her back?"

"Now, Janet, let me understand this," said Mrs. Cherry. "Do you mean a *real* monkey—did you *see* him?"

"I saw his hairy paw as plain as anything!" declared the little girl. "Come on, I'll show you where he was."

"I guess it was only a bull frog she saw," suggested Dick. "There's terrible bull frogs in that pool by the spring—big, green frogs."

"It wasn't a frog at all!" insisted Janet. "Don't you s'pose I know a frog when I see one? Frogs haven't got paws like a monkey!"

"Well, a frog has something like a paw," insisted the boy.

"But it hasn't got hair on!"

"No," Dick had to admit, "a frog hasn't any hair."

"Well, this was a hairy paw and it took Ethel May!"

"Let's go down there and see what there is to be seen—if anything," suggested Mrs. Cherry.

“I suppose you really saw it, Janet,” she added, somewhat doubtfully.

“I’m sure I saw the monkey’s paw!” declared Janet. “Anyhow, my doll is gone, and if somebody didn’t take her, where is Ethel May?”

She pointed to the place where she had put the doll down. Her mother and Dick had seen Ethel May lying there—now Ethel May was gone—there was no doubt of that.

Slowly, and hardly knowing what to think of the strange adventure, Mrs. Cherry followed Dick and Janet down to the edge of the pool that was formed by an overflow of the spring.

“There’s where I laid my doll down,” explained Janet, pointing to the spot. Dick remembered it, for he had noticed a little bush growing up and drooping over, like a canopy, to cover the rag doll.

“And where did the hairy paw come from?” asked Mrs. Cherry.

“Right out there—from that hole in the bushes,” and Janet pointed a trembling finger at the place.

Mrs. Cherry stepped forward to look more

closely, thinking, perhaps, some waving branch of a tree might have been blown down by the wind; might have become entangled in the doll's dress and so have lifted it up. Janet might have mistaken the brown bark on the tree branch for the hairy paw of a monkey.

But, even as Mrs. Cherry looked, there was a rustling in the leaves of the trees overhead—a rustling not caused by the wind. And there was a queer, chattering noise.

"It's a squirrel!" cried Dick.

"No, it isn't a squirrel—look! It's a *monkey*—a real *monkey*!" shouted Janet, pointing.

And, surely enough, it was!

Perched on a tree branch, over the heads of the members of the little picnic party, was a brown, hairy monkey. In his paws he grasped Janet's doll—Ethel May. And the monkey leaped about, winding his strong tail around tree limbs, and chattering and showing his teeth as if angry at something.

"Why—why—it is—a real monkey!" gasped Dick, and his voice showed not fear but delight.

Mrs. Cherry rubbed her eyes to make certain she was not looking at something in a day-

dream. But surely the children could not "make-believe" as real as this.

"It is a monkey and he's got my doll!" cried Janet.

"Mother, how do you s'pose a monkey got here?" asked Dick. "Is he from a circus, do you think?"

The children knew that monkeys did not live in the woods and country around Uncle Harry's mill. Monkeys are tropical animals and must have the warmth of the jungle, where it never freezes, to make them happy.

"This is the strangest thing—" began Mrs. Cherry.

But suddenly there came another interruption. There was more rustling in the bushes and forth came—an Italian organ grinder, smiling and bowing, showing his white teeth. Over his back was slung his organ.

"Ah!" he murmured as he saw the two Wild Cherries and their mother. "You hava seen, mebbby—da monk? You hava seen my Peeto?" He was asking questions in his own queer way.

"Is that your Peeto up there?" inquired Mrs. Cherry, pointing.

The Italian gave one glance upward, caught

sight of the brown, furry body and cried out:

“Yaas, dat’s my Peeto! Ah, you bada da monk! Come down to your papa queek! Come down queek, my Peeto!”

He held up his hands. The monkey in the tree tops chattered and scolded.

“He’s got my doll!” Janet informed the organ grinder.

“Yaas, hee’s gotta your doll, li’l gal? Das too moocha da bad! Bad Peeto! Come down to papa, queek!”

Dick and Janet were too much excited to laugh at the organ grinder calling himself the monkey’s “papa.” It did not strike them as being funny at the time though, later, they chuckled over it.

Peeto, the brown, furry monkey, chattered and scolded up on his perch in the tree. He held Ethel May tightly in his paws. He did not seem to want to come down.

“Ah! I feex him!” laughed the organ grinder. “He is one bad monk—is Peeto! He ran away from me when I maka da music. But I find him! Here, Peeto! Come down an’ eata da banan!”

He took from his pocket a yellow banana,



He took from his pocket a yellow banana and held it up.

and held it up. Seeing this the monkey chattered again, leaped about in the tree and then hung head down, swinging by his tail.

"Oh, look at him!" cried Dick in delight.

"Has he got my doll yet?" asked Janet.

"Yes, he's giving her a good swing!" laughed Dick. Of course he could not expect to be as worried over the fate of Ethel May as was her little mistress.

"Oh, I want my doll!" wailed Janet.

"No cry!" exclaimed the Italian. "Peeto he come down queek when he seea da banan! He bring yo' doll down all same queek, too!"

And, surely enough, that is just what Peeto did. Down he came scrambling through the tree branches, carrying Janet's doll with him. The sight of the banana was too much for the monkey. In another moment he had swung himself up on top of the hand organ. Dropping Ethel May, Peeto reached for the banana his master held out to him, and he ate it hungrily while Janet caught up her beloved doll.

"Now everyt'ing alla da right!" laughed the organ grinder.

In his broken way he told Mrs. Cherry that

he had been traveling about the country, playing his tunes and letting Peeto gather pennies in his little red cap. Then, while playing not far from the woods in front of a farm house, Peeto had broken his cord and had run away.

The monkey must have been hidden in the bushes when Janet laid her doll down by the spring, and have reached out his hairy paw to pick up Ethel May.

"I guess he thought she was banana, maybe!" chuckled Dick.

"Huh! I guess my doll is better than a whole bunch of bananas!" declared Janet.

The Italian organ grinder, who said his name was Carlos, took off his hat, bowing good-bye to Mrs. Cherry and the children. Peeto, also, doffed his little red cap which he had left behind on the organ when he ran away, but which his master put back on the small, hairy creature. Then the two went away together.

"I wish he'd played us a tune," said Dick.

"Yes, then Ethel May could have danced," added Janet.

Dick was going to say that a rag doll couldn't dance, but he thought his sister had

been teased enough for one day, so he kept silent.

“Well, we have had several adventures,” said Mrs. Cherry a little later, “and now I think it is time to go back home—back to the mill I mean.”

“We had a dandy picnic,” said Dick.

“It’s nice now, but it wasn’t so nice when Ethel May was gone,” sighed Janet. “I’m glad I got her back.”

Through the woods and fields they walked to the mill, the golden sun sinking low in the west behind a bank of clouds.

“It looks like a storm,” said Mrs. Cherry.

“Do you think it will be a big one, so the dam will burst?” Janet asked.

“No, of course not!” laughed her mother. “Don’t think about such things!”

Uncle Harry was not quite so well when the Wild Cherries and their mother reached the mill house. Dr. Hardy had been sent for and Aunt Laura looked worried. The sky became overcast with dark clouds, and the signs of a storm grew more plain.

However everything seemed safe and snug in the house when Dick and Janet went up to

their bed rooms after supper. They were tired from the day's picnic—a clean, healthy, happy tiredness, though.

Both children were soon sound asleep. Mrs. Cherry remained up a little later than usual to help Aunt Laura give Uncle Harry his medicine. And when Mrs. Cherry at last started for her room she could hear the mournful wailing of the wind outside.

“It's going to be a bad night,” she said to her husband.

It was several hours later that she was suddenly awakened by hearing Dick cry out:

“Oh, the dam is breaking! The dam is breaking and the water is coming in!”

CHAPTER XVII

THE LITTLE WIRELESS

“WHAT’S that?” exclaimed Mr. Cherry, awakening soon after his wife. He, too, had heard his little son’s cry in the night.

“It’s Dick,” answered Mrs. Cherry, quickly putting on a dressing gown and slippers.

“He said something about the dam breaking,” went on Mr. Cherry as he sprang out of bed. “I hope—”

“Hark!” exclaimed his wife.

To their ears came a roaring, splashing sound.

“It’s raining dreadfully hard,” Mrs. Cherry said.

“And there’s water loose, somewhere,” went on her husband. “I hope there is nothing wrong at the dam or flood gate. If there is the mill might go!”

Again came Dick’s call:

“The dam is breaking! The dam is breaking!”

“Nonsense! He can’t know anything about the dam when he’s in bed!” said Mr. Cherry.

“Perhaps he is dreaming,” suggested his mother. “Dick sometimes has bad dreams, and he may have eaten too much picnic lunch.”

And a bad dream was all it proved to be. For when Mrs. Cherry went to her son’s room she found him sitting up in bed, though his eyes were closed, and he was murmuring:

“Look out for the high water! The dam is going to break!”

“Dick! Dick, wake up, my dear! You are having a bad dream!” she said, gently shaking him. “And no wonder you are dreaming about water, my son,” she added. “Your window is open too much and the rain is blowing in on you.”

And that is just what had happened. Dick had taken a little more cake than was good for him, and when he fell asleep he dreamed there was a flood and that the dam above the mill was about to break. The rain, dashing in his open window and splattering on his face, made the dream seem very real to Dick, and he had called out the alarm.

He was soon awakened and quieted, going to sleep again almost before his mother had time to shut the window against the storm. And it was a severe storm, much rain falling, with the wind howling.

"I'm glad there is no thunder or lightning, though," said Mrs. Cherry as she went back to bed. "The lightning always makes Janet very much frightened."

"There's a lot of water falling," said Mr. Cherry. "I wonder if the dam is all right?"

"Why, do you believe in Dick's dream?" asked his wife.

"Not exactly. But I'd like to know that everything was all right up at the dam."

Mr. Cherry soon found out that there was looking after her ill husband, and when she nothing to fear, however. Mrs. Kent was up, heard her guests moving about she went to their room to ask if anything was wrong. They told her about Dick's bad dream, and Mr. Cherry spoke about the dam.

"The water in the lake will get higher with all this rain," he said.

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Kent, "but the watchman at the flood gate telephoned to me a little

while ago that he was on duty, and had opened it. That's why the mill brook is roaring and gurgling so—it has more water in than usual. But most of the flood water goes down a big valley on the other side of the lake.”

“Oh, is there a telephone from your house to the gate house?” asked Mrs. Cherry.

“Yes,” Aunt Laura answered. “It is there so that, in flood times, or when there are storms, we can talk to the watchman and he can talk to us.”

“A good idea,” said Mr. Cherry. “If anything were to happen that the flood gate wasn't open when the water got too high, the mill might go.”

“Yes, and we would lose everything,” said Mrs. Kent. “We wouldn't want that to happen. But the watchman always opens the gate when the lake gets too high for the dam.”

The storm kept up all night, though it died away toward morning. Dick and Janet were not disturbed, however, and when daylight came, though it still drizzled, there was not the heavy downpour that had lasted all through the hours of darkness.

“Did I really yell out in my sleep about the

dam breaking?" asked Dick at the breakfast table, when told of his night alarm.

"You surely did," his mother told him.

"That's funny!" laughed the little boy. "I don't remember a thing about it!"

"I didn't hear anything," said Janet.

"And I'm glad you didn't," remarked her mother with a smile.

The day was too stormy for the Wild Cherries to venture out, so they had to amuse themselves in the house. They were allowed to go in the mill, however, as it was only a short distance away.

Storm or calm, the business of the mill must go on, and even in the rain some farmers came with bags of grain or corn they wanted ground. Janet and Dick had fun watching their father and Tim Gordon operate the machinery, and once Dick was allowed to pull the lever that started the small turbine wheel going, to turn a mill that ground corn into chicken feed.

Uncle Harry was a little better by morning, though he was far from being out of danger. Dick and Janet heard their father and mother speaking to Aunt Laura, and the word "operation" was mentioned in whispers.

“What’s a operation?” asked Janet of her brother.

“I don’t know, but it’s something pretty bad, I guess,” he answered, “for I saw Aunt Laura crying when she thought nobody was looking. They make operations in hospitals.”

However, though there was worry for the older folk, none was allowed to mar the happiness of the children.

All day it rained, sometimes hard and again gently until, even with all the fun they could have in the mill, Dick and Janet were beginning to wish they might go out and play.

“It isn’t very wet,” said Dick to his mother.

“Please couldn’t we go out if we put rubbers on?” Janet begged.

“No, my dears, I’d rather you wouldn’t,” their mother said. “I am afraid Dick’s stomach is a little upset, and that is why he had the bad dream last night. Better stay in until it clears up.”

The two Wild Cherries fretted a little because they must remain in, but their mother knew what was best. However, they were making her a bit nervous by teasing so often to be allowed to go out when there came an in-

terruption in the way of a ring at the door bell.

“Oh, it’s the hermit!” cried Janet, looking from a side window.

“Do you mean Señor Paletta?” asked Mrs. Cherry.

“Yes, and he’s got something under his arm; —a package,” reported Dick, crowding up to the same window where Janet was standing.

“Here, you quit shoving me!” she commanded. “I was here first!” and she pressed her nose quite flat against the glass.

“Well, give me half, can’t you?” begged Dick. “You don’t want all the window, do you?”

“I want my share,” insisted Janet. “There you can come this far and that’s all,” and she made an imaginary line on the sill with her chubby finger.

“That isn’t half!” declared Dick. “You’re trying to take the biggest part. Go on—shove over!”

“I will not! Mother, make Dick quit pushing me!” cried Janet.

“Children! my dears!” gently chided Mrs. Cherry, and then Janet, knowing she was in the wrong, moved a little to one side and said:

"Well, there's the middle, anyhow," and she drew another line.

"Yes—that's half all right," agreed Dick, now satisfied. By this time Miss Lufkin had gone to the door to let in Señor Paletta or the hermit, as he was often called.

"Is there anything the matter up at the dam?" asked Mrs. Kent, coming in the room to greet her visitor.

"At the dam—something wrong? Oh, no, all is right there," the Italian inventor answered. "Why should you think so?"

"I guess it's because of a bad dream Dick had in the night," said Mrs. Cherry. "He dreamed the dam was broken."

"Which I hope may never happen," murmured the Italian. "But it is Dick and Janet I have come to see," he went on with a smile, placing a package on the table. "I have a present brought them."

Sometimes Señor Paletta spoke English a bit backward.

"Oh, what is it?" cried Dick.

"For us?" exclaimed Janet.

"Yes, a little wireless all for you—so that you may hear the music, stories of the beds (he

meant bedtime stories, I suppose) and songs. I have a little wireless brought you!"

Dick and Janet looked on with shining eyes and eagerness as Señor Paletta opened the wrapping paper.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOWN A HOLE

“SAY, that’s great!” exclaimed Dick.

“Just wonderful!” echoed Janet.

“I am glad you like him—I mean it,” and Señor Paletta corrected himself.

With eager eyes the two Wild Cherries looked at the small but complete wireless outfit the inventor had made for them. It was in a black box, with shining knobs and levers here and there. Dials there were, also, just as on a big wireless outfit.

“How does it work?” Dick wanted to know, after he and his sister had spoken their thanks.

“And where is the waveral—I mean the aerial?” asked Janet, for she knew the wireless that had been put in Uncle Harry’s house needed a long outside aerial in order that the distant broadcasting stations might be picked up.

“The aerial is all inside,” explained the in-

ventor. "It is what is called a loop aerial. All you need to do, to listen to the music and the bed—I mean the bedtime stories," and he laughed at his mistake, "all you need to do is to put the telephones on your ears and turn these knobs until you hear what you want. Like this."

He quickly adjusted a set of head telephones on Dick and next one on Janet. Señor Paletta then turned some of the knobs on the front of the black box. In another moment smiles spread over the faces of the children.

"I hear music!" cried Dick.

"So do I!" added his sister.

"I thought you would," said the inventor.

"Does it have a loud speaker?" Dick wanted to know, when the wireless had been turned off after the music from a distant station had played.

"No, it is too small to operate a loud speaker," said the Italian.

"I think it's a lot nicer without a loud speaker!" exclaimed Janet quickly. She did not want their hermit friend to think they did not like the present he had brought them.

"Oh, so do I!" cried Dick. "It's a lot more

fun to listen with the telephones on your ears.”

“I am glad you like him—I mean the wireless I have made for you,” went on Señor Paletta. “He is all for yourself—the two Cherries who are so wild!” and he smiled at the children.

“I’m sure it is very kind of you to go to all this trouble,” said Mrs. Cherry who, with her husband, had been looking at the new wireless.

“It is of no trouble at all,” said the inventor. “I love children!”

“And we like you—don’t we, Dick?” asked Janet.

“We sure do!” replied her brother.

“Will that small outfit really pick up distant stations?” asked Mr. Cherry.

“Of a sureness it will!” declared the Italian. “I show him to you. He is easy!”

He gave a pair of telephones to Mr. Cherry who was soon listening to a far-off concert, after Señor Paletta had turned some knobs and handles on the wireless box.

“Well, that’s fine!” cried Mr. Cherry. “Only I wonder if the children will know how to work it—they may break it.”

“He is very simple—I made him so on pur-

pose that the Cherries who are wild would have no trouble," and again the inventor smiled. "It is just that they turn some knobs so and some handles this way. I shall show you, Señor Cherry, and your good wife and you can teach the children."

"That will be fine," answered Mr. Cherry.

Dick and Janet were delighted with their new plaything, which was more than a toy. Miss Lufkin and Aunt Laura listened in, and then the outfit was carried to the room where Uncle Harry lay ill. He was feeling a little better that day and he was much pleased with the little wireless outfit, to which he listened.

There was no more teasing on the part of Dick and Janet to go out in the rain. They had enough to keep them busy now, and they soon learned to tune in their own wireless set as well as their father could do with the larger one that had been put up for Uncle Harry.

Sunshine came next day to dry up the water that had fallen, and the Wild Cherries could play outside. But every now and then they would come in to listen to their wireless.

But this was not all that Señor Paletta did. A few days later, when Dick and Janet came

back from having gone fishing (catching only a mud turtle as it happened) they found the Italian busy in the living room of Uncle Harry's house.

"Are you making another wireless?" asked Dick.

"Somewhat—yes," was the answer. The Italian was so busy with wires and switches, with vacuum tubes that faintly glowed, and other queer things, that he hardly looked up.

"He is trying to put in a sending set," whispered Mrs. Cherry to her children. "He thinks perhaps he'd hear us if we talk into this horn, even when he is up in his cabin near the lake. And we know we can already hear him when he talks to us from there; for we have done that."

"Do you mean we're going to have a sending station here and a hearing station, too?" asked Dick.

"Yes, if it works as Señor Paletta thinks it will work," said Mrs. Cherry.

"And he will work—I am sure!" exclaimed the Italian, as he got up from the floor where he was half under a table on which some of the

new wireless stood. "We are almost ready to try him."

And, a little later, when the hermit had gone back to his lonely cabin, Mr. Cherry talked, shouted and sang into the horn that had been put on the table.

"I wonder if he heard me?" said the father of the Wild Cherries.

"We'll know pretty soon," said Mrs. Cherry. "He told us to turn this switch, and then he can talk to us by wireless."

And, lo and behold! When the switch was turned, out of the horn came the voice of the Italian saying:

"I heard you very well, Señor Cherry. Now let the little ones who are wild talk to me."

Then Dick and Janet talked, laughed and sang into the horn and, by means of the wonderful wireless, their voices were sent through the air for two miles or more to the cabin of the hermit on the shore of the high lake.

"This is wonderful!" exclaimed Mr. Cherry. "It's just as good as if we had a telephone from his cabin down to our house here, and we can talk back and forth just as easily."

Of course you all know that wireless waves can be sent for a much longer distance than two miles, so what Señor Paletta did was not more than other inventors have done. But he made his set so simple that even Dick and Janet could work it. And it was not every boy and girl who had a sending set as well as a receiving one.

And the time was to come when this little sending set, which the Italian inventor had put in to amuse the Wild Cherries, would have a part in a very strange happening.

“This is great!” cried Dick, when several messages had been sent back and forth, from the house to the hermit’s cabin. “We can talk to him and he can talk to us and there aren’t any wires in between like telephone wires.”

“And we can sing, too,” added Janet, who was fond of songs and music.

“Yes, we can sing,” agreed Dick. “But I like talking better.”

The Wild Cherries were certainly having good times in the country. Of course they wished Uncle Harry would get better, and, as the days went on, and Mr. Cherry worked hard to keep up the business of the mill, the children

thought that everything would, some time, come out all right.

"Is Uncle Harry any worse to-day, Mother?" asked Dick one morning, when he had seen tears in his Aunt Laura's eyes.

"Well, a little worse," answered Mrs. Cherry. "But perhaps he will be better to-morrow."

"He won't lose the mill, will he?" Janet wanted to know.

"We hope not," Mrs. Cherry went on. "Your father is working hard to keep the business going. If no accident comes I think all will be well."

"Maybe there'll be an accident to the dam," suggested Dick. "It might wash away like I dreamed it did."

"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed his mother. "Now you children run out and play and don't think so much about sickness and troubles at the mill. I dare say everything will end happily."

Dick and Janet ran out to play, but, as they often did, they wandered back to the mill after a while. They loved the dusty place with its rumbling, rattling machinery. Best of all they

loved to sit on the bank and watch the great, mossy-green wheel turn with the splashing water.

“Let’s go up stairs in the mill,” suggested Dick to his sister, after a while. “Maybe we’ll see some of the big rats!”

“Oh, all right,” she agreed. “But I’m going to take a stick along to hit a rat if he comes for me.”

“I’ll take a stick, too,” decided Dick. “But I don’t guess any rats will come for us. They always jump in their holes when they see us. Are you scairt?”

“No, I’m not scairt of a rat—in day time,” and Janet added the last three words after a moment of thought.

“I guess I wouldn’t like ’em at night,” admitted Dick. “You can’t see to hit ’em then if they come for you.”

Uncle Harry’s mill, like all places where grains are stored, was plentifully supplied with rats. Several cats and a number of traps did not keep the hungry, gnawing creatures away.

Dick and Janet had often seen the rats scurrying about when they went up into the upper rooms of the mill where corn and other

grain was sometimes stored. For Uncle Harry not only ground grist for the farmers, but he bought wheat, oats and barley and sold it again. Between the time of buying and selling he stored the grain in the upper part of the mill.

The rats and mice knew this, of course, and grand feasts they had, coming out from their nooks, holes and corners when no one was around. But, as Dick had said, the rats nearly always scurried for their hiding places when they heard footsteps. The children liked to see them run.

So into the upper story of the mill went the Wild Cherries. Tim Gordon, who was watching a lot of wheat being ground up into flour to make bread, saw the children going up the stairs and called to them.

“Be careful, now,” he warned.

“We will,” promised Dick.

On tiptoe, as they reached the head of the stairs, went Dick and his sister. They wanted to see a rat before the creature should hear them. But rats have sharp ears, and, just as the heads of the brother and sister appeared above the floor, several of the biggest rats in

the mill knew that they were being spied upon. With squeaks of surprise they dashed for their holes.

“Look at ’em go!” cried Janet, who was not at all afraid.

“There! I almost hit one!” cried Dick, flinging his stick at the last rat of the company. “I nearly banged him before he got in his hole!”

The children knew, from what had happened at other times, that the rats would not come back while they were there. So, having seen the creatures, and having enjoyed the thrill of watching them scatter, Dick and Janet looked about for something else to do.

“Look, there’s a little door I never saw open before,” and Dick pointed to one set in the floor off at one side.

“Oh, what a funny little door!” exclaimed Janet. “I wonder what goes down it!”

Before Dick could warn her to keep away, the little girl ran toward the hole, the trap door of which was turned back. The next moment, to her own surprise and that of her brother, she stumbled and fell into the opening.

“Oh, look out!” shouted Dick. But it was too late.

“Dick! Dick!” screamed Janet. “I’m falling down a hole! Oh, get me out! Get me out!”

Then her voice died away as if she had gone into a tunnel.

CHAPTER XIX

OUT OF THE WINDOW

DICK CHERRY did not know much about a grain mill. But when he saw his sister vanish down the hole in the floor he knew that he must do something to help.

Over he ran to the edge of the opening, and looked down. To his surprise he could see nothing of Janet. She was gone! There were some kernels, or grains, on tiny ledges at the side of the hole, but no little girl.

“Janet! Janet!” cried Dick.

There was no answer. The little Cherry boy looked down into what seemed like a long, wooden box, with smooth sides. Though he did not know it, this was a grain chute—a sort of wooden tunnel—down which corn, oats, barley or other grains could slide.

“And Janet fell down there!” murmured Dick, out loud, though speaking to himself, for there was no one else in that part of the mill.

That is, if you don't count a big, gray rat which, just then, stuck his pointed nose and curling whiskers up out of his hole.

He was one of the rats that had scurried away when the children first tiptoed up the stairs in the mill. After Janet had fallen and had cried out, and Dick had shouted, there was silence for a few seconds. Out came Mr. Rat again. But when he saw Dick—Oh, you should have seen him run for his hole and vanish down it!

“It was just like when Janet fell down her hole!” exclaimed Dick, telling about it afterward.

“It wasn't my hole!” objected Janet. “I didn't want it!”

But this was after Janet had been rescued from the hole. Just now she was in it and Dick was much frightened. Still he knew he must do something to help.

“Janet! Janet!” he called, bending down over the opening, but taking care not to get too close for fear he might slide along the slippery floor and fall in. For the mill floor was smooth, shiny and slippery from years of use.

When Dick found that Janet did not reply,

and when he could see nothing but darkness down in the hole, the little Cherry boy knew he must go for help. He wanted his father or his mother or Tim to come and do something.

Down the stairs rushed Dick. Tim was grinding some grain and was standing near the big, whirling wheels, between which wheat was turned into flour to make bread.

“Oh, Tim! Tim!” shouted Dick, raising his voice to make it heard above the whirr of the machinery.

The foreman seemed to guess that something had happened. Perhaps he could tell by Dick’s voice, or from the look on Dick’s face.

“What’s the matter?” asked Tim. He pulled a handle which shut off some of the machinery, and when this had stopped it wasn’t quite so noisy in the mill.

“Janet—Janet—she’s gone!” gasped Dick.

“Gone? Where?” Tim wanted to know.

“Down a hole!” replied the Cherry lad.

“Down a hole? Do you mean the grain chute on the second floor?” asked Tim.

“I don’t know what it was, but she went down the hole,” and Dick was almost ready now to shed a few tears—not exactly to cry, but

just to let a few tears fall. For he feared something terrible had happened to poor Janet.

“Come on! I think I know where to find her!” shouted the foreman. Dick looked around for his father, but Mr. Cherry was not in the mill just then. Dick hurried after Tim, who was covered with white flour, as any miller should be.

Tim ran out to a platform at one side of the mill, where wagons backed up to be loaded. At this platform was a large wooden chute, something like the big water pipes by which locomotives on the railroad are given a “drink” when they are “thirsty.”

This wooden pipe, or chute, was hanging over a big box wagon, and a man on the wagon, to which were harnessed two horses, was pulling a rope which opened a door, or gate, inside the chute.

Just as Dick and Tim reached the platform, the man on the wagon had pulled the rope. The chute was opened. Down into his wagon flowed a stream of grains—chicken feed it was.

And after the first rush of the chicken feed grain something red flashed out. There was a startled cry from the object in red. There

was a shout of surprise from the man on the wagon. Dick gasped and Tim laughed.

“There she is!” cried the mill foreman.

“Why—it’s Janet!” exclaimed Dick.

“A little girl!” yelled the man on the wagon.

The red object gave itself a shake and Janet’s dress, which had been ruffled up over her head, hung down where it belonged as she stood up in the wagon. For Janet it was who had slid down the grain chute, after falling into the hole. And she had been shot right out into the wagon with the grain.

The man who had come to the mill for a load of chicken feed was too surprised to reach up and shut off the flowing stream of grain by pulling on a second rope. And as he and Janet stood there in the wagon, the grain, piling up, was soon almost to the little girl’s knees. Of course the man, being taller, had his knees farther up his legs, and the grain was only just above his shoe tops.

“I thought she’d come down this chute!” explained Tim with another laugh. “That’s why I came out here.”

“How—how did it happen?” asked Dick, wonderingly.

The man on the wagon, by this time, had shut off the flow of feed. He looked at Tim and asked:

“Say, are you giving away presents with every load these days?”

“Not exactly!” chuckled Tim. “It was an accident.”

As for Janet, after catching her breath two or three times—her breath that had nearly gotten away from her—she seemed to be all right. She was covered with dry dust, though.

And when she gave herself a little shake, to get her dress in proper position, a cloud of dust floated about her and the man on the wagon.

“Ker-choo! Ker-choo!” they both sneezed.

“Are you—now—are you all right, Jan?” asked Dick.

“Yes—I’m all right now,” she answered. “But I was scairt when I fell down.” She sneezed again.

“How did it happen?” asked the man who was getting a load of chicken feed. He, too, sneezed once more.

Dick told how he and his sister had gone up in the mill to play and look at the rats. He

also told how Janet had fallen down the hole in the floor.

“That hole should have been covered,” added Tim, taking up the story. “I’ll see that it is after this. We used to have a big bin over that hole,” he said, “but it was torn down. We kept chicken feed in it, and from the bin a tunnel, or wooden chute, runs down, as you see, to this platform. Instead of putting the feed into bags, we used to let it run down the chute directly into wagons.

“I knew there was a lot of grain left in the wooden chute,” said the foreman to the farmer who had called to buy some. “That’s why I told you to back your wagon under the chute and pull the rope. I didn’t think you’d get a little girl as well as chicken feed.”

“I didn’t, either,” laughed the farmer. “I never was more surprised in my life!”

“I was s’prised, too, when I fell in,” said Janet. “I just kept sliding right along.”

It so happened that almost as soon as Janet fell into the hole which led into the wooden chute, the farmer opened the little door and the grains began running out. Of course Janet slid along with them.

Luckily for Janet her dress had gone up over her head, and this kept the chicken feed from getting into her eyes, nose and mouth. And she was inside the wooden chute only such a little while that no harm came to her except covering her with a white, powdery dust.

"But that'll brush off," she said. "And, anyhow, this is an old dress."

Dick was very glad nothing worse had happened. And when his mother and father heard about it they looked at each other, and laughed.

"Another adventure for our Wild Cherries," said their mother.

Mr. Cherry took care to see that the hole in the floor was covered over and the door nailed down, as it was no longer needed. The farmer had taken the last of the chicken feed from the old chute.

Nothing that ever happened to Dick or Janet worried them for very long afterward. They soon were laughing at the little girl's queer adventure as they went off to find something else at which to play.

"We never had as much fun anywhere as we're having here in the country, did we, Janet?" asked Dick, a few days later when they

had gone to a distant farm and had ridden on loads of hay.

"It's lovely," Janet agreed. "And tomorrow mother is going to take us after wild strawberries."

This little trip was a great success. They gathered many of the beautiful red berries which have a much different flavor than the cultivated, or "tame," ones growing in a berry patch. Dick's feet became entangled in some of the vines and he fell down, scratching his face on some brambles, but he didn't mind that.

"Everything is so lovely here," said Janet one day, when she and Dick had gone to a wide green meadow to fly Dick's kite.

"It sure is dandy!" agreed Dick. "And I hope nothing ever happens to Uncle Harry or the mill so we'll have to go home before it's time."

"What could happen?" asked Janet.

"Oh, I don't know," answered her brother. "Only I hope it never does happen."

But it did—as I shall tell you when the proper time comes.

One day, about a week after Janet had fallen

down the hole into the chicken feed chute, Dick called to his sister and said:

“I know how we can have a pack of fun!”

“How?” she asked.

“Do you want to fly through the air?” inquired Dick without telling all his plan.

“Do you mean in an airship?” demanded Janet. “I don’t know—maybe if it was a big airship I wouldn’t be scairt, but maybe—”

“No, I don’t mean an airship,” broke in Dick. “Look, see that rope up there,” and he pointed to one running through a pulley wheel on the end of a beam that stuck out under the eaves of the mill, up near the peak of the roof.

“Yes, I see it,” said Janet.

“Well,” went on Dick, “you can have a fine flying ride, just like in an airship, almost, on that rope.”

“How?” asked his sister.

“We’ll go up to the second floor again—you know, where we saw the rats, and—”

“You mean where I fell in the hole?” asked Janet.

“Yes, but you don’t have to fall down the hole again,” explained Dick. “Anyhow you can’t, ’cause it’s boarded over. But the rope

will come in the window up there. The rope has a hook on it. I can fasten that rope around your waist."

"And what then?" Janet wanted to know as Dick paused.

"Then you jump out of the window and you go flying."

"Huh! Jump out of the window and maybe fall and break my leg! I guess not!" declared the little girl, shaking her head.

"But you'll be fast to the rope," exclaimed her brother.

The rope running over a pulley wheel, or, rather, two or three pulleys, was long enough to reach from the ground up to the roof of the mill, and then down again. A man, pulling on one end of the rope, after the other end was made fast to a number of bags of grain, could hoist them to the second or even third story of the mill. And by reason of several pulley wheels one man, or even a boy, could raise a much heavier weight than he could if there had been but one pulley.

"Yes, I'll be fast to the rope," admitted Janet, "but the other end of the rope will be

loose and it will fly out of the pulley and I'll come down—bump!”

“No! No!” eagerly cried Dick. “I'll keep hold of the other end of the rope, and I'll hoist you up and down, just like Tim or daddy lifts up the bags of grain. You'll go flying around on the rope, just like an airship. Want to do it?”

“Yes—I guess so,” agreed Janet, after thinking it over for a little while.

She went up to the second floor of the mill with Dick. The hook end of the rope was pulled in an open window and the rope was made fast about Janet's waist, as the children had seen it wound about a bundle of bags of grain.

“Now you wait until I get down to the ground and hold the other end of the rope,” explained Dick. “When I holler, you climb out of the window and jump.”

“Won't I fall?” asked the little girl.

“Didn't I tell you I'd hold the other end of the rope?” answered Dick. “I'll hoist you up and down and then you can hoist me up and down, and we'll pretend we're flying.”

By reason of several pulleys it was easy for one child to lift the other up or lower down without too much of a strain.

“Now don’t jump until I holler,” warned Dick, as he hurried down the stairs to where the free end of the rope was coiled on the ground.

Everything was in readiness. Janet, with the rope fastened about her waist, was perched on the window sill.

Mr. and Mrs. Cherry, coming around the corner of the mill just then, heard Dick shout:

“All right! Jump!”

An instant later Mrs. Cherry thought she would faint as she saw Janet leap out of the window and then hang suspended in mid air, dangling and swaying on the end of a rope, the other end of which was held by Dick on the ground.

“Oh, my gracious!” gasped Mrs. Cherry.

CHAPTER XX

GID'S GOAT

MR. CHERRY saw in a glance all that was happening and he seemed to see, in a flash as it were, all that might happen. He gave one quick look at his wife, glanced back toward the two Wild Cherries and then he said in a low voice to Mrs. Cherry:

“Don't move! Don't say a word!”

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because you might startle Dick and then he would let go of the rope he is holding. If he did Janet would get a bad fall. Stand still. I'll make it all right.”

Though very nervous and much frightened, Mrs. Cherry said nothing more, nor did she move. Her husband, though his heart was beating faster than usual, walked slowly forward. Then Dick, who was slowly letting the rope slip through his fingers, so that Janet was

slowly coming down—Dick looked up and saw his father.

“Oh!” gasped Dick.

Janet, swinging out on the end of the rope, about on a level with the second story window of the old mill, looked down and also saw her father and mother.

“Look at me! Look at me!” she cried, and she did not seem at all afraid. “I’m flying, I am!”

“Hold the rope tight, Dick my boy!” said his father in a voice that trembled a little, though he tried not to let it. “Hold it tight.”

“Oh—all right,” said Dick. Somehow he felt that his father did not like what was going on.

A moment later Mr. Cherry had reached his son’s side and had grasped the rope in a firm hand.

“Let go now, Dick,” he said.

“Can’t I lower Janet down and pull her up, like Tim pulls up the bags of corn?” asked Dick, much disappointed.

“Indeed you can’t!” cried Mr. Cherry sternly. “I’ll attend to you as soon as Janet is

down. This is the worst thing you have ever done!"

Dick began to look frightened now, as his father slowly and carefully lowered Janet toward the ground. Down she came, swinging around slowly on the end of the rope, just as did the bags of grain and meal which Tim lowered.

"Hello, Daddy!" gaily cried Janet as she approached her father. "Isn't this fun!"

Mr. Cherry did not answer. His wife, who had seen that Janet was being safely lowered, now came forward. There were tears in her eyes as she cried:

"Oh, children! How could you do it and frighten us so? How could you do it?"

"Do what?" Dick wanted to know. He couldn't understand that anything was wrong.

"Put Janet on the end of a rope and lower her like this," said his mother. "Why did you do it?"

"Why, what's the matter with this?" the boy asked. "Janet likes it; don't you, Janet?"

"I didn't first, but I do now. I think it's lots of fun!" and the little Cherry girl laughed. By this time her father had lowered her so close

to the ground that her feet touched. Then Mr. Cherry began taking the rope off from around Janet's waist.

"Oh, aren't you going to pull me up again?" she asked her father.

"Certainly not!" he answered, sternly. "And I am going to punish Dick for doing this."

"Doing what?" demanded Dick. "I didn't do anything."

"Didn't you fasten Janet on the end of this rope and lower her out of that window?" asked Mr. Cherry, pointing to the one from which the little girl had jumped.

"Why, yes, I did," admitted Dick. "But we were playing airship, and she was it. I was going to let her lower me next. Why, she didn't get hurt."

"No, but she might have if the rope had broken," said Dick's father.

"It couldn't break," answered the little lad. "It's a strong rope. Tim pulls up five bags at a time and five bags are heavier than Janet."

Mr. Cherry knew this to be true. There really was no danger of the rope breaking.

"But it might have slipped out of your hands, Dick. You shouldn't have done it," his father said.

"It couldn't slip, Daddy," said Dick earnestly. "I had it twisted around my arm, just like Tim does when he lowers the bags."

"Yes, but even with that the rope might have gotten away from you and Janet might have fallen. If she had she would have been badly hurt."

"She wouldn't have been hurt much if she fell," said Dick.

"Why not?" asked his father, who wondered what excuse the boy would make now.

"'Cause I put a lot of grass on the ground where she'd come down if she did fall," said Dick. And, surely enough, he had pulled up almost a wheelbarrow load of green grass, which was heaped up on the ground beneath the window of the mill out of which Janet had come. "That grass is just like a cushion! Look!" cried Dick, and he jumped on the grass to show this.

"Well, it was a wrong thing for you to do—very dangerous!" said Mr. Cherry, "and I don't want you ever to do it again!"

"I won't," promised Dick, who could tell by his father's voice that he was angry.

"And I must punish you," went on Mr. Cherry.

Dick looked sorry on hearing this. But he did not beg off. And, after all, he had done wrong and must suffer for it. As for Janet, it wasn't exactly her fault, for Dick was older and she always, or nearly always, did what he told her to do.

So Dick was punished, and wept bitter tears but, in the end, it was a good thing, for it made him more careful. That is careful in some ways, but not careful in others. We can't learn everything all at once, you know.

It was a few days after this that Dick and Janet, out for a walk in the village, had a funny adventure.

They had gone to the store for Aunt Laura, and were on their way home with a bag of sugar when, happening to look in the side yard of a green house, they saw a boy and a goat.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Dick at the sight of the animal.

"What a nice goat!" said Janet.

"I wonder if that boy hitches him to a cart

and gets rides?" went on Dick. "I'd like a goat ride."

"So would I," added his sister. "Go on—ask him, Dick."

The boy in the yard, who, up to this time, had been looking at the goat which was eating grass, did not seem to notice the two Wild Cherries. Then Dick called:

"Hello!"

"Hello!" answered the boy.

"My name's Dick Cherry," went on Janet's brother. "What's yours?"

"My name's Gid."

"Gid what?" Dick wanted to know. He felt as if he might ask if it could be "Gid Dap," which was what Dick had heard teamsters call to their horses.

"Gid Turner—that's my name," the other boy answered, swinging around a rope he held in his hand.

"That's a nice name," remarked Janet. "I never heard the name Gid before—but it's a nice name."

"'Tisn't all my name," went on the boy. "It's Gideon, but they all call me Gid, for short."

"That's like me," said Dick. "My reg'lar name's Richard, but they all call me Dick."

"And they call me Jan, sometimes, though I'm Janet," said the owner of that name.

"That your goat?" Dick wanted to know as the children looked one another over.

"Sure he's my goat."

"What's his name?"

"Kicker."

"Kicker? What a funny name!" laughed Janet.

"It's 'cause he kicks," explained Gid.

"Why don't you harness him to a wagon and get a ride?" inquired Dick.

"'Cause," was all Gid answered.

"'Cause why?" asked Dick. "Haven't you got a wagon?"

"Sure I got a wagon. It's right here," and he wheeled out a small express cart.

"That's a dandy wagon!" exclaimed Dick. "Why don't you harness your goat to it and have a ride?"

"'Cause I'm scairt of Kicker!"

"Pooh! I'm not afraid of a goat!" boasted Dick. "Come on, Jan," he called to his sister.

"I'll harness this goat to the wagon and we'll have a ride!"

The two Wild Cherries entered the yard. Kicker looked at them as if mildly wondering what was the idea. Dick and Janet were going to have another adventure—only they didn't know it.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAME DUCK

DICK looked at Gid's express wagon, and at some coils or rope in the new boy's hands. Janet waited for what her brother might do or say. Meanwhile she looked at Kicker the goat. He seemed mild, kind and gentle as he cropped the grass.

"Did you ever hitch Kicker to your wagon?" asked Dick.

"Oh, yes—I hitched him up—once," was the answer. Gid laughed a little.

"Did he run?"

"Oh, yes—he ran."

"Wasn't it fun?" Dick next wanted to know.

"Kinder—sort of," admitted Gid with a grin that showed where one front tooth was missing. Gid had a lot of freckles, too, and he could whistle through the place where a front tooth ought to have been.

"Well, I'm not scairt to harness your goat

to the wagon and take a ride," went on Dick. "Want to come, Janet," he asked his sister, "and sit in the wagon with me?"

"Yes," she answered.

"See! She isn't scairt!" boasted Dick to Gid.

"Well, she don't know Kicker, and you don't, either," was the reply.

"You got to know how to manage a goat," laughed Dick. "Sam Ward—a fellow back home—he had a goat once, and he said nobody could drive him. But I did."

"Was he like Kicker?" Gid inquired.

"He looked just like him," said Dick.

"Um! Maybe. But there's a lot of difference in goats," was Gid's opinion. "Some's a lot better'n others. But if anything happens don't blame me," and he handed the ropes to Dick.

"I'm not afraid," declared the Cherry boy. "Push the cart over this way, Gid."

"Have you got any lines to steer him with?" Janet wanted to know as the boys brought the little express cart nearer Kicker. "We couldn't drive Grunter, the pig, good 'cause we didn't have any lines."

“Yes, I got lines, and Kicker’ll let you tie a loop around his nose and steer him that way,” Gid said. “He’s all right when you drive him when he isn’t hitched to the cart. But as soon as he has to pull anything—”

“Well, what happens?” asked Dick, as Gid stopped.

“You’ll see, if you try to drive him,” was the answer, and again Gid laughed.

“Oh, I’ll drive him all right,” and Dick seemed very sure of himself.

Kicker, the goat, made no fuss at all while he was being harnessed to the little wagon. He even seemed to like it.

“There! What’d I tell you!” boasted Dick, when he was almost ready to take his place in the cart behind the goat.

“Wait,” advised Gid. “’Tisn’t over yet!”

“Come on, Jan, get in!” invited her brother.

Almost as anxious as was Dick for a ride, the little girl got in the back end of the wagon. Dick held in his hands two short lengths of line, which were fastened about Kicker’s nose. By pulling on the right or left line the goat could be “steered,” as Janet called it, either way.

Gid moved off to one side, leaving a clear path for Dick to start the goat down the walk.

“Go on!” called the little Cherry boy. “Give us a nice ride, Kicker.”

“Maybe we can ride all the way home and deliver the sugar,” suggested Janet.

“Sure we can!” declared Dick. “Gid-dap, Kicker!” he cried.

The goat, with a funny little wobble of his tail started off, pulling behind him the express wagon containing Dick and Janet.

“Watch him! See how nice he goes!” cried Dick.

There was a queer look on Gid’s face.

“I never knew him to be as good as this before,” he murmured. “But maybe—”

That, however, was the end of Kicker being good. Suddenly the goat looked around and seemed surprised to find that he was pulling Dick and Janet in the express wagon—to say nothing of five pounds of sugar.

“Baa-a-a-a-a!” bleated Kicker.

Then he raised his hind legs in the air and began doing the thing for which he had been named—he kicked!

“Whoa! Whoa!” cried Gid, running up.

“Let me out! Let me out!” screamed Janet.

“Stop it! Stop it!” ordered Dick.

But Kicker was not taking any orders just then. With another bleat he kicked again and then he started to run. He was, very likely, trying to pull himself loose from the cart, but the boys had tied the rope in hard knots that did not slip.

Bumping and swaying the wagon followed after the goat, Dick holding tightly to the rope lines, and Janet holding to the sides of the cart.

“Whoa! Whoa!” yelled Gid, racing after the runaway goat. But Kicker did not whoa any better than he stopped. On he ran, the cart rattling after him.

“Leeeeee-e-e-et mee-e-e-e-e ow-ow-ow-out!” stammered Janet, for the rattling of the cart over the stones of the street, where they now were, jiggled her words all out of joint.

“Oh, Dickckckckckck!” cried the little girl. “What’s ha-a-a-a-a-appening?”

“Kicker’s just ru-ru-ru-running—that’s all,” was the answer.

“Is he—now is he run-un-un-un-unning awa-a-a-a-a-ay?”

"I g-g-g-guess so," admitted Dick. And now he was beginning to feel a bit frightened. For certainly the goat seemed very strong and he was running very fast.

"I told you so!" cried Gid, trotting along behind. "I knew this would happen! He did it once with me. That's why I never harness him to the cart."

However it was too late, now, to say this. Kicker was running away with Dick and Janet. Janet was beginning to wonder how far the goat would take them when something else happened.

Kicker tried to turn a corner of the street, but he turned too short. And, as he made the turn a woman, with a basket, also came around, from the other direction. Kicker gave a jump. There was a scream from Janet, a shout from Dick and, an instant later, the wagon upset in front of the woman.

Out shot Janet! Out shot Dick! Out bounced the bag of sugar, the paper breaking and scattering the sweet grains all over the sidewalk; for Kicker had run up on the pavement just before he turned the corner.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed Janet.

“Are you hurt?” Dick asked as he scrambled to his feet, for he was only shaken up. He saw Janet holding her elbow. And then Dick looked at the woman who had jumped out of the way just in time to escape being butted by the goat.

“Miss Lufkin!” gasped Dick as he saw his aunt’s cook.

“Well, of all things!” she cried. “I was just coming to look for you, as I wanted some more groceries, and I brought the basket to put the bag of sugar in.”

Dick looked to where the white grains were scattered over the sidewalk.

“I guess you can’t put it in anything—now,” he said, sadly enough. “This is the second time I busted a bag of sugar. ’Member the time I ran into the Gipsy when I was on my roller skates, Jan?” he asked.

“Yes, I ’member,” she said. “Oh, dear!”

“Oh, is your arm hurt?” asked Miss Lufkin.

“I hit my funny bone on the cart when we tipped over,” Janet said. “It’s better now. But it hurt at first.”

Neither of the children were much hurt, though they were dusty and dirty. The wagon

was not even broken. Kicker had pulled himself free and was running on—all alone.

“There he goes!” said Dick ruefully, looking down the street. “Will he get lost, Gid? I’ll run after him—”

“He’ll come home all right,” said Gid, easily. “’Tisn’t the first time he’s run away. But I told you that he couldn’t be driven to a cart.”

“I guess you were right,” agreed Dick. He was beginning to find out he didn’t know so much about goats as he thought he did.

“Oh, the sugar is all spilled!” gasped Janet, seeming to notice this for the first time.

“Maybe we can save some of it,” said Dick.

“I’ll go get a big spoon and a tin pail,” offered Gid, kindly.

“I’ll help you pull the wagon back,” spoke Dick. “I’m sorry—”

“Oh, that’s all right,” and Gid was very good-natured about it.

With the help of Miss Lufkin, about half of the sugar was saved. Then she told the Wild Cherries to go on home for she would do the rest of the shopping, and get more sugar to replace that which was spilled.

"Come on over some other day," invited Gid as the Wild Cherries left him.

"We will," promised Janet, rubbing her elbow.

"Don't you want me to help you chase Kicker?" asked Dick.

"Nope. He'll come home after a while."

And Kicker did. Dick and Janet, going over to Gid's house later in the day, found this out. And to make friends with the goat they pulled sweet clover for him to eat. Kicker seemed to like it.

"I guess he wasn't made to be hitched to a cart," was Dick's opinion.

"I guess not," agreed Gid. "He is a funny goat."

Of course Mrs. Cherry had to scold Dick for losing the sugar. But he said it wasn't his fault.

"How was I to know, Mother, that the goat would run away?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose you couldn't know that," she answered. "But I do wish you would be more careful. Try to think more, Dick, my dear."

"Yes'm, I will," he promised.

It was two or three days after this that, as Dick and Janet were walking along a country road, where they had gone to pick wild strawberries, they heard a loud quacking sound.

"What's that?" asked Janet.

"Sounds like a duck," said Dick.

"Oh, so it is, and there he is!" cried Janet.

"Look, Dick, it's a duck and he's lame!"

Waddling and fluttering along in the road, just in front of the children, was a lame duck. One of its webbed feet seemed to have been crushed.

"I guess an auto partly ran over him," suggested Dick.

"I guess so," agreed his sister.

"Say!" suddenly exclaimed Dick. "We ought to help this lame duck! Mother said I must be more careful and thoughtful. I can be thoughtful about this duck, can't I, Jan?"

"I guess so. But what you going to be thoughtful about him?"

"I think we ought to get a wheelbarrow, or a cart, or something and ride him. 'Cause a lame duck can't walk."

“That’ll be nice—I mean it’ll be nice to ride him,” spoke Janet. “If we could only find a wheelbarrow!”

She and Dick looked up and down the road while the lame duck fluttered painfully along, sadly quacking.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BIG KITE

“WHOA there! Come back!” cried Dick, running after the duck. “You better let me carry you, ’cause you can’t walk on a lame leg.”

As he was about to pick up the quacking and fluttering fowl Janet, who had gone on a little farther the other way, uttered a cry and said:

“Oh, I see a wheelbarrow, Dick.”

“Where?” he asked.

“Down the road there. See!”

Dick looked and saw.

“I’ll get it!” he cried. “You watch the duck so he can’t get away.”

“I guess he can’t get away far with a lame foot,” spoke Janet. But Dick did not wait to hear. He was running down toward the barrow with which he soon came back, pushing the one-wheeled cart in front of him.

“Now we’ll give the duck a ride,” said the boy. “We’ll take him home and they’ll be glad

of it. I guess we're being thoughtful now all right; aren't we, Jan?"

"I guess so—yes. But where does the duck live?"

"Oh, we'll find the place," declared her brother. "He can't live very far from here, 'cause a duck can't travel as far as a chicken. We'll just put him in the wheelbarrow and roll him along. We'll stop at all the houses we come to and ask if he lives there. If he does, we'll bring him in."

"Oh, yes!" cried Janet. "That'll be nice!"

Dick set the wheelbarrow down and ran after the lame, fluttering duck. The fowl was not easy to catch, for, though it could not travel well on the ground with only one good leg, its wings were not broken and it could fly.

But it could not fly as well as it could before having been hurt, and after a little chase down the road, Dick caught it. He cuddled it tenderly in his arms, smoothed the ruffled feathers and murmured:

"I'm not going to hurt you, Duckie! I'm just going to take you home!"

"Let me wheel him part of the way," begged Janet as her brother put the duck in the barrow.

"You can't!" Dick objected. "It's too heavy. I could hardly push it myself."

"I can wheel it all right," declared Janet. "Watch!"

She took hold of the handles, as Dick stepped back after having put in the duck, and the little Cherry girl managed to walk along, pushing the wheelbarrow in front of her. It was hard work but she did it.

The duck quacked in surprise at this queer way of riding.

"There! Can't I push him all right?" asked Janet.

"Yes, you can—you're pretty strong," complimented Dick. "But I'll push him to the first house, and then it'll be your turn."

To this Janet agreed and she walked along by her brother's side, looking at the duck which had now fluttered to the far end of the barrow, where it lay in a huddled heap.

"Maybe he lives in there," spoke Dick, pointing to a house not far down the road. "We'll go in and ask."

But just as they were going to turn into the drive-way the duck flapped and fluttered, nearly getting out of the barrow.

“Oh, you mustn’t do that!” exclaimed Janet, gently putting the fowl back. “He’s going to get away, Dick!”

“Don’t let him, Jan!”

“I can’t help it,” she cried. “He’s getting out again.” For no sooner had she put the duck into the corner of the barrow than out he fluttered once more, nearly getting over the side.

“Say,” cried Dick, “we got to fasten him in—somehow.”

“I know how we can do it!” exclaimed Janet.

“How?”

“We can tie him with my apron. I don’t need it on ’cause I’m not going to play in the dirt—not right away, anyhow.”

“All right,” said her brother. “Take it off.”

So Janet took off her apron and, very gently, the children tied it around the duck, so he couldn’t spread his wings. The bird quacked loudly during this operation, and tried to get loose, but the children managed to fold the apron about him. Then the duck grew quiet,

and when he was put in the corner of the barrow he stayed there.

“Now he can’t get out,” murmured Janet, and she had hardly said this when, around the corner of the house out toward the road, came walking a woman. She looked curiously at the two children and the wheelbarrow.

“What’s all this noise?” the woman asked. “I thought I heard a duck quacking.”

“You did,” answered Dick, taking off his cap and making a little polite bow. “Did you lose a duck? I mean did you have a duck and did he run away and did an auto go over him and make him lame? ’Cause if you did we got your duck!”

“Gracious sakes alive, no! I don’t keep ducks!” laughed the woman. “But have you really a duck in there?”

“Yes’m, we have, really,” answered Janet. “We found him side of the road and he can’t walk. But he fluttered out so we got him tied in my apron, ’cause I don’t need to wear it now on account of not playing in the mud and—”

“Dear me! How you rattle on!” laughed the woman again. “Why you really have a

duck there, haven't you?" she cried as she looked in the barrow.

"Doesn't he look cute?" spoke Janet, for just then the duck stuck his neck out from the folds of the apron and gave a feeble quack.

"He's a funny duck!" laughed Dick. "I wonder where he lives?"

"Mr. Platt, down the road a few houses, keeps ducks," said the woman. "Maybe it's one of his."

"We'll go there and ask," suggested Janet. "Come on, Dick, it's my turn to wheel him now!"

"All right," agreed the boy, and off the two children went down the road, trundling the lame duck, while the woman, laughing, stood in her yard.

"Those must be the two Wild Cherries I have heard about," she murmured. "The children who are staying at Kent's mill. Well, they may be wild but they are kind-hearted to take all that trouble for a lame duck! Wrapping him in her apron, too! Oh, I could hardly keep from laughing while they were here."

But, now that the two Wild Cherries were

gone, the woman laughed as much as she pleased.

Dick and Janet were half way to the next house when they heard, back of them, the sound of an automobile coming along.

"Look out, Jan! Don't get too near the middle of the road!" cautioned Dick.

Janet was steering the barrow to one side, and the duck was giving another quack, when the car came to a stop close to the children and a voice cried:

"Well, of all things! What will you two wild ones do next?"

And there sat Mr. and Mrs. Cherry, in Uncle Harry's flivver!

"Oh, we found a lame duck!" exclaimed Janet, "and we're taking him home. I guess an auto ran over him. I got him wrapped in my apron, Mother."

"Yes, I see you have," said Mrs. Cherry with a smile.

"Well, I just had to do it," explained the little girl, "'cause he kept fluttering out all the while."

"Where are you taking him?" Mr. Cherry wanted to know.

"Down to Mr. Platt's," answered Dick. "The lady back there said he kept ducks and maybe this was one of his."

"Well, all right, but be careful," cautioned Mrs. Cherry.

"Where you going?" asked Janet of her parents.

"We are going over to see Dr. Hardy about Uncle Harry," answered Mr. Cherry.

"Is he worse?" asked Dick quickly, for he liked Uncle Harry.

"He isn't much better," Mrs. Cherry answered. "He may have to go to the hospital. That's what we are going to see Dr. Hardy about. As soon as you deliver the duck, children, you might go back and see if you can help Aunt Laura."

"Yes'm, we will," promised Dick.

Mr. and Mrs. Cherry drove on, and Janet wheeled the barrow to the house just down the road. As it happened it wasn't the right one, but the next one was, as the children could tell by seeing a number of ducks, chicken and geese in the yard.

"I guess this bird lives here," spoke Dick.

And the lame duck did, as Mr. Platt said

when he had come out to look at the fowl wrapped in Janet's apron and lying in the barrow.

"Yes, that's one of mine," said the man. "It must have wandered down the road and then got run over. Much obliged for bringing it back. It's one of my best ducks, I wouldn't like to lose it. Thanks a whole lot."

"You're welcome," answered Dick.

Carefully Mr. Platt unwound Janet's apron from the lame duck and took the fowl under his arm.

"Can you mend the broken leg?" Dick wanted to know.

"Yes, I guess so. It isn't exactly broken. It's just bruised a bit," Mr. Platt decided after looking at it. "Be all right in a few days, I guess. That your wheelbarrow?" he asked, as Dick started trundling it out of the yard.

"No, sir," the boy answered. "I found it side of the road. We'll take it back."

"You can leave it here, if you like, and I'll return it," said Mr. Platt.

"Do you know whose it is?" inquired Janet.

"Oh, yes, it's Mr. Sunbury's," replied the owner of the lame duck. "He was working

at his road ditch with it a while ago as I drove past. Shouldn't wonder but by this time he was trying to guess who took his barrow."

"Then we'd better take it back," decided Dick.

He and Janet started back as fast as they could go, Dick wheeling the barrow, and leaving behind the laughing poultry man.

"Queer children, those," he murmured. "Must be the two Wild Cherries stopping at Kent's mill. But they have kind hearts. Taking all that trouble for a lame duck! Um!"

Dick and Janet had nearly reached the place where they had found the wheelbarrow when they saw a man coming toward them. As he reached them the man stopped, looked at the children and then at the barrow and said:

"Wa'al, so you're bringin' it back, are you?"

"Is this yours?" asked Dick.

"Wa'al, yes, 'tis! I was jest lookin' for it. I left it side of th' road while I went back t' get my shovel. I'm workin' on th' ditch. But when I got back my barrow was gone."

"We took it," admitted Dick.

"To give a duck a ride," added Janet.

"T' do what?" cried the man, who, as the children guessed, was Mr. Sunbury.

"We had to ride a lame duck," explained Dick, and when the story was told, Mr. Sunbury burst into a roar of laughter, clapped his hands down on his legs and cried:

"Wa'al, I s'numm!" Mr. Sunbury was from New England.

"We—now—we're sorry if you didn't want us to take your wheelbarrow," went on Dick, while Mr. Sunbury laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

"Oh, land love you! That's all right!" he chuckled. "I only wished I'd 'a' seen you—that's all! Ridin' one of Platt's lame ducks in my wheelbarrow wrapped in an apron! Wa'al, I s'numm!" And he laughed again, Dick and Janet joining in. For it was funny.

"Wa'al, anyhow, I'm glad t' get my barrow back," went on Mr. Sunbury, after a while. "You can have it again, though, to ride lame ducks or chickens, if you like," and he waved a cheery good-bye to the children who started back home.

"Hum!" mused the man as he started his ditch-digging again. "They must be these

two Wild Cherry youngsters from over at Kent's mill. I heard about 'em. Good boy an' girl though; I'll say that! I s'numm!"

Dick and Janet found Aunt Laura with red eyes when they reached home. She had been crying they guessed, and with gentle voices they asked if they could do anything to help her.

"Not now, my dears," she answered. "Your father and mother have gone to see Dr. Hardy."

"Yes, we met them," explained Dick. Then, as he and Janet went off quietly by themselves he added to his sister: "It's too bad about Uncle Harry, isn't it?"

"Yes," agreed Janet, "do you think he's going to lose his mill, or something like that?"

"Maybe," assented Dick. "And maybe he's a lot sicker. I wish we could do something to help."

"So do I," said his sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Cherry looked sad and serious when they came back. They talked with Aunt Laura in the parlor a long time behind closed doors.

The murmur of voices floated out faintly to the children. They knew something was go-

ing on, but they could not guess what it was. Mrs. Lufkin went in and out of the room where Uncle Harry was in bed. And at last the housekeeper said:

“Now you children run out and play. Don’t stay moping in the house. Go out and have some fun.”

So Dick and Janet did, finding Gid Turner and going fishing with him. They didn’t catch any fish, but they had fun.

It was the next day, when Mrs. Cherry had warned Dick and Janet to be as quiet as they could about the house, that Dick led Janet off to one side and said:

“I know what I’m going to do.”

“What?” she asked.

“I’m going to make a great big kite,” he answered.

“How big?”

“Oh, bigger’n what you are, or me, either. I saw a picture of one in a book Gid has. He’s going to help make it. Come on over to his house. We’ll have some fun!”

And, a little later, the three children were busy making a large kite, with which they were to have a strange adventure.

CHAPTER XXIII

UNCLE HARRY GOES AWAY

MAKING a big kite is no more difficult than making a small one, if you know how, and have the right kind of sticks, string and paper. All these Gid had, and, with the help of Janet and Dick, there was soon built a kite so tall that it stood a foot above the heads of the children.

“Say, that’ll pull like anything when it gets up!” cried Dick.

“I guess it will,” agreed Gid.

“Could I hold the string, once?” begged Janet. “Please!”

“It will lift you right off your feet in the air!” declared Dick. “We wouldn’t dare let you hold it, Jan!”

“Oh, it would not lift me up, would it, Gid?” asked the little girl.

“Well, it might,” was Gid’s reply. “It’ll pull terrible hard in a strong wind. But you could hold it if the wind doesn’t blow too hard.”

“Yes, maybe she could if the wind doesn’t blow too hard,” agreed Dick.

“ ’Tisn’t blowing very hard now,” said Janet, wistfully. “Could I hold it now? Please!”

“Wait till the paste dries,” said Gid.

He had a ball of strong cord and when this was fastened to the kite, and when the wet, pasted paper had dried, the boys took it out to a big meadow, Janet following. There was some comfort flying a kite in a place like Summer Hill, for there were no telegraph or electric light wires to tangle in the kite string or tail. As a matter of fact this kite had no tail. Gid bent the cross stick in the shape of a bow, and this sort of a kite needs no tail to keep it steady.

After two or three trials, during which the kite dived down to the ground, it finally sailed well up into the air, much to the delight of the lads and Janet.

“Oh, let me hold the string!” she begged, and finally she was allowed to do so.

“It doesn’t pull much!” she said. “I can hold it easy!”

“It will pull after a while,” predicted Gid, and, surely enough, when the breeze grew

stronger, it was all Janet could do to hold down the big kite. She was glad enough to pass the string to Dick, who took a turn or two of it around a stump.

"It can't pull the stump up," he said.

"No, I guess it can't," agreed Gid.

The children put "messengers" on the kite string. These messengers were pieces of paper with holes in and the breeze blew them, whirling them about, until they were carried all the way up the cord to the kite itself, high in the air.

The wind grew stronger and stronger, causing the kite to dip and dive about high in the air. Eagerly the boys and Janet watched it—like some big bird—an eagle, perhaps—it seemed.

"Maybe the string'll break," ventured Janet.

"Oh, I guess it won't," spoke her brother.

"It's good and strong," said Gid.

But, hardly had he said this than there came a heavier puff of wind. There was a snapping sound and the kite cord broke off close to where it was tied to the stump.

"Oh!" cried Janet.

"There she goes!" shouted Gid.

“Come on!” exclaimed Dick. “We got to chase after it!”

Free from the holding cord, the kite for a time sailed on high in the air. The long string acted as a drag, or an anchor, and kept it “before the wind,” as a sailor might say.

But now it was coming slowly down, while below it, across the green meadow, raced Dick and Gid, with Janet (whose legs were shorter) following along after the two lads.

“She’s coming down!” cried Dick.

“Yes, and right near your uncle’s house,” added Gid. “I guess we can get it back all right—if it doesn’t bust!”

The kite was headed toward the mill. It was whipped by the wind around the corner of the house and, just as Dick and Gid followed, they saw the big kite swoop down toward Miss Lufkin who, at that moment, dressed in bonnet and shawl, came out to go to the store.

Down dived the kite straight toward the housekeeper.

“Look out!” yelled Dick.

“Oh! Oh!” screamed Janet.

“It’s going to bunk into her!” exclaimed Gid. And that is just what the runaway kite did.

It swooped down over Miss Lufkin's head, and, had it been a little lower, the pointed end of the upright stick might have struck her.

As it was, however, it skimmed over her head and lifted off her bonnet as neatly as if some one had done it by hand. Then the kite, still blown by the wind, kept on, sailing upward and carrying with it the housekeeper's best bonnet.

"Oh! Oh, what has happened?" she cried, putting her hands up to her head. The kite had made very little noise, and she could not imagine what it was. At first she thought it was some great bird swooping down on her out of the sky.

Then, turning, Miss Lufkin saw the Wild Cherries and Gid.

"Did you do that?" she cried. "Did you take my bonnet?"

"It was the kite!" cried Dick, pointing.

Miss Lufkin looked up and saw, sailing above and beyond her the paper toy, with her bonnet caught fast on the end of the stick.

"Oh, my goodness!" she cried. "Bless my eyes!"

"We couldn't help it," explained Dick. "The kite broke away!"

"I'll get your bonnet!" offered Gid. "I guess it's coming down now."

And the kite was. The breeze died away for a moment or two, and the kite settled toward the earth. Almost as soon as it landed, Dick and Gid were at the spot, untangling Miss Lufkin's bonnet from the wreck of strings, sticks and paper—for the kite was broken in its fall.

"The bonnet isn't much hurt," said Dick, as he picked it up.

"No, but the kite's all busted," sighed Gid.

"You can save part of it," remarked Janet who had at last run up to where the kite had fallen. "You can make two little kites now."

"Yes, I guess we can," agreed Gid.

"Well, I must say, I won't look very respectable, going to the store this way!" exclaimed Miss Lufkin, whose hair had been much ruffled when her bonnet was so roughly pulled off by the kite.

"We're terrible sorry," spoke Dick, handing over the bonnet.

“Oh, well, I s’pose you couldn’t help it,” and Miss Lufkin smiled. “I’ll go back and fix myself up again. But I wouldn’t make such large kites if I were you.”

“Maybe we better not,” agreed Gid, who was trying to save as much as he could from the wreck of the big paper toy.

Later, he and Dick each made for himself a smaller kite from what remained of the large one, and Janet could hold these with no danger of being carried off her feet.

It was two days after the kite adventure, when the Wild Cherries came down the village street in the afternoon, having been over to Gid’s house that they saw, drawn up in front of the mill, a strange wagon.

“It’s an ambulance!” cried Dick, who had often seen them in Vernon where he lived.

“Oh, what you s’pose has happened?” gasped Janet.

“I—I guess maybe Uncle Harry—” began Dick, but he did not finish.

“Come on,” urged Janet, taking Dick’s hand. “We got to run!”

They reached the house just as Uncle Harry was being carried out on a stretcher. The sick

man, who was wrapped in blankets, looked at the children and smiled.

"I'm going to have a fine ride!" he cried gaily. He never let it be known when he was in pain.

"Where you going?" asked Janet.

"To the hospital," Uncle Harry answered. "They're going to give me a ride there in this fine ambulance. It feels like a feather bed they tell me, so soft and easy. I'm going to the hospital to get better. And while I'm gone I want you two Wild Cherries to look after my mill for me. Will you do that? Will you take care of the mill?"

"Yes, Uncle Harry!" answered Dick.

"Aren't mother and father going to be here?" Janet wanted to know.

Her mother came out of the house just then, and around the corner drove Mr. Cherry in the flivver, in which was seated Aunt Laura.

"Children," said Mr. Cherry, "your mother and I are going with Aunt Laura to take Uncle Harry to the hospital. There he will be made well. We are going to leave you two here."

"All—all alone?" faltered Janet. "Have we got to stay all alone?"

“No, Miss Lufkin will be here, and so will Tim,” said Aunt Laura. “You won’t be afraid, will you?”

Dick looked at Janet and Janet looked at Dick.

Each of the Wild Cherries took a long breath. It was like getting in a bath tub filled with cold water.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BIG STORM

“Now then, where are my two brave little soldiers?” It was Mother Cherry who asked this. At the words Dick and Janet straightened up. They held back the tears that were coming into their eyes.

“That’s better!” said Mother Cherry with a laugh. “Forward—March!”

The two Wild Cherries threw back their shoulders, saluted and then, wheeling about, marched to the front steps. The ambulance driver, the doctor who had come in the “wagon that rode like a feather bed,” and Tim Gordon looked at the children in surprise.

It was an old game that their mother was playing with Dick and Janet. Often, when they were smaller, and had not wished to do the things she had told them to do, she had pretended that they were soldiers and that she was the Captain.

“Good soldiers always obey their Captain!” she would say.

Then the Wild Cherries, conquering their own feelings, would do as they were told. When she saw, now, how badly they were feeling because they had to stay at the mill while daddy and mother went away, Mrs. Cherry quickly played the old game.

“Halt!” she called, suddenly, and Dick and Janet, having reached the steps, came to a stop.

“I’ll just speak to them a moment,” whispered Mrs. Cherry to her husband. “I’ll explain, and then everything will be all right.”

“Perhaps you and Robert had better not come with us,” said Aunt Laura. “I think I can manage about Harry.”

“Not at all!” exclaimed Mr. Cherry. “The children will be all right at the mill with Tim and Miss Lufkin. We are going to see you through, Laura!”

To Dick and Janet Mrs. Cherry said, in a low voice:

“Children, this is a time of trouble. You must be brave soldiers and help. Your father and I are going to Midvale where the hospital is. Uncle Harry has suddenly become worse,

and Dr. Hardy says only care in a hospital will save him. He must have an operation."

"Oh, all right, we'll stay here with Tim and Miss Lufkin," promised Janet, swallowing a big lump in her throat.

"And we'll help save the mill," added Dick, swallowing a big lump in his throat. He did not know what true words he was speaking.

"Then it's all right!" said Mrs. Cherry with a smile. "I knew my two little soldiers would be brave."

She patted them on their backs—she did not kiss them, for soldiers are not kissed—except in France, and there it is all right.

"We'll be back in two or three days," said Daddy Cherry as he drove on in the flivver.

"Good-bye!" and Uncle Harry waved his hand from the ambulance to the Wild Cherries.

"Don't forget to look after my mill!"

"We'll take care of it!" promised Dick and Janet.

But in spite of their promises and trying to keep up the spirit of soldiers, it was all they could do to hold back the tears when they saw their father and mother going down the road behind the ambulance. Miss Lufkin, however,

was a wise woman. She bustled out with a smile and said:

"I've just baked some doughnuts. Wouldn't you each like one with powdered sugar on, and a glass of milk to drink? Come, soldiers!" she cried, in imitation of Mrs. Cherry. "Come and get your rations!"

Then Dick and Janet smiled. Their tears were gone. After all, it was quite an honor to be left partly in charge of a big mill.

"There's lots to do!" said Tim Gordon, after the little lunch. "I never knew a busier time. All the farmers in the county are bringing their grain to be ground, I do believe."

"I'll help!" offered Dick.

"And I'll make out the bills," said Janet.

The remainder of that day they played about the mill, "helping" now and then whenever Tim thought of something they could do. As he had said, it was a busy time. Much grain was brought to be ground between the big stones. The water splashed over the great moss-covered wheel outside.

"The wheel turns fast, doesn't it?" asked Dick, as he stood beside Tim at the flume.

"Yes, too fast," was the answer. "There's

too much water coming down, I'm afraid."

"What makes it?" asked Janet, and she thought Tim looked worried, as mother sometimes did when things didn't go just right.

"Too much rain," answered the foreman. "The lake must be very high. I hope the dam holds. If it breaks—well, there won't be any mill left to grind the grain." But this last he said in a low voice. He thought Dick and Janet had not heard him—but they had.

"Do you think the mill will be washed away, Dick?" asked Janet that night as they were getting ready for bed.

"I hope not," he answered. "But it's raining again. Listen to it!"

Indeed the drops were again pattering on the roof. But it soothed the Wild Cherries to sleep. They were a bit lonesome, at first, without their father and mother, but Miss Lufkin was very kind. And when he had closed the mill, Tim came over and told the children a story. They did not care to listen to the radio that first night of being left alone.

Tim took up his quarters in the house, and for company Miss Lufkin moved into the bedroom where Mrs. Cherry had slept.

"I'll be near you all night long," she told Dick and Janet.

It was still raining next day when the children awoke. The water was pelting down, and every time the wind blew it spattered great showers of drops from the trees.

After breakfast Señor Paletta came down from his cabin up on top of the hill near the lake. He was quite wet and shook the rain off him as a big dog might do.

"I come to test my new radio—the radio that you can talk to me over," he said to the children. "I want to see if it works in a storm."

The inventor had put in this radio set as much for himself as for the children, as he wanted to try out some new machinery he was making.

"Yes, it works all right," he said, after he had flashed the vacuum tubes and made sparks come from the wires. "When I go back I will talk to you and you may talk to me. I wanted Jed North to go to my cabin so I could talk to him now and test this set, but Jed isn't there."

"Do you mean the gate watchman isn't there?" cried Tim.

“Jed wasn’t when I came down,” said Señor Paletta. “But I think he will be there before long.”

“He should be there!” cried Tim. “Jed North should be on the watch. If the lake gets too high he must open the flood gate or the mill will be swept away. He should be there! I must see about this. It will be dangerous if Jed isn’t on the watch. I’ll go back with you, Señor Paletta.”

So Tim went up on the hill through the storm, leaving the Wild Cherries in charge of Miss Lufkin. There was not so much to do at the mill now, as few farmers would bring their grain out in this storm, though many had come through the little showers.

It was afternoon when Tim came back, to find Dick and Janet playing steamboat with an old spinning wheel the housekeeper had brought down out of the attic for them.

“Did you find the watchman?” asked Dick.

“Yes, Jed is there now,” he said. “But there’s something the matter with him. He says he’s sick, but I think he’s just lazy. He doesn’t like to stay in his lonely cabin when

there's a storm. They ought to get another man. I'll just telephone him now and see if he is feeling any better."

There was a telephone from Uncle Harry's house to the cabin where the flood-gate watchman stayed when there was danger. Ringing the bell, Tim was soon talking to the man on guard.

"How's the weather up there?" Dick and Janet heard Tim ask the watchman over the house telephone. "Pretty wet, eh? Well, so it is here. I'm thinking we're in for a worse storm. Well, you keep watch, and if the lake gets too high open the gate. If you don't the mill will wash away."

This would be a dreadful thing to have happen, the Wild Cherries knew. But they hoped for the best.

Darkness came early that evening, for the sky was covered with black, weeping clouds. Miss Lufkin gave the children and Tim an early supper.

"You may listen to the radio for a little while," she said, "and then it will be time to go to bed."

“Do you think mother and daddy will be home to-morrow?” asked Janet.

“I think so, dear; yes. I telephoned to the hospital about your uncle.”

“How is he?” asked Dick.

“Well, it’s hard to say, as yet,” replied the housekeeper. “The nurse said he was worried about the mill. He seems to fear that this high water may wreck it.”

“Oh, we’ll take care of it,” promised Janet.

“And if the watchman doesn’t open the gate in time—I will!” declared Dick.

The radio did not work very well on account of the storm. But Dick and Janet had some fun talking to Señor Paletta over the extra set he had put in. They listened to him, and also heard a little music he played for them on the mouth organ.

As Dick and Janet went up to their rooms, they heard the shutters banging and the house shook with a rumbling sound.

“What’s that?” gasped Janet.

“It’s just the storm, dearie,” answered Miss Lufkin. “It’s growing worse instead of better. Thunder, lightning and rain! But don’t be afraid. This is a strong house.”

"It's a big storm all right," murmured Dick to his sister. "I guess the lake must be pretty high now."

"When it gets too high the watchman will open the gate, won't he?" asked Janet.

"Yes," answered Miss Lufkin. She hoped he would.

How long Dick and Janet slept they did not know. But they were suddenly awakened, at what appeared to be the middle of the night. A roaring sound seemed to fill the air, but it was not a roar like that of the thunder. Dick sat up in bed to listen. He could hear the howling of the wind and the pelting of rain. In the next room Janet was moving about.

"What's the matter, Jan?" called Dick.

"I—now—I'm afraid," his sister answered. "Oh, Dick, it's a terrible storm! I'm afraid the mill will wash away!"

CHAPTER XXV

SAVING THE MILL

DICK switched on his electric light (for they had such things at Uncle Harry's house) then put on some of his clothes and went softly into his sister's room. He found Janet already up and partly dressed.

"I—I can't sleep in this awful storm," she said.

"I can't, either," admitted Dick. "I'm not prezactly scairt, but I don't like it."

"Me, neither," Janet said.

From the next room came the voice of Miss Lufkin.

"Are you children up?" she called.

"Yes'm," answered Janet.

"We can't sleep," added Dick.

"I don't blame you a bit—I can't, either," admitted the housekeeper. "It's pretty bad, but there's nothing to be afraid of. We'll

go down stairs. I think I hear Tim up, too."

The foreman of Uncle Harry's mill was out in the kitchen, whence came the appetizing smell of boiling coffee.

"What are you doing, Tim?" called Miss Lufkin.

"Making me some coffee," he answered. "The storm's getting worse. The lake must be very high, for the water's coming over the edges of our mill flume. I can hear it. Jed hasn't opened the gate yet, and I'm going to find out why. It's time he did. The flood-gate ought to be open or the dam will burst, and then—well, I'm going to find out what's wrong!"

He was boiling some coffee in the pot, carefully watching it.

"Would you children like some cookies and milk?" asked Miss Lufkin.

"Yes, please," murmured Janet.

And when they were all four eating a midnight lunch, while the wind howled outside, and the rain pelted down, the house sometimes shaking under the force of the blast, Dick said:

"It's just like Gypsies, isn't it, Janet?"

"Kinder like 'em," she answered, her mouth half full of cooky.

Tim finished his coffee and got his rain coat and rubber boots from a corner of the room.

"You're not going up to the watchman's cabin in all this rain and storm, are you?" asked Miss Lufkin, in surprise.

"Sure I am!" was the answer.

"Why don't you ring Jed up on the telephone and ask him why he hasn't opened the gate?" inquired the housekeeper. "That's the easiest way. Call him on the telephone."

"I did."

"What'd he say?"

"Nothing. He didn't answer."

"He didn't?" cried Miss Lufkin. "Then something must be the matter!"

"That's what I think," said Tim. "Either Jed has gone away and has forgotten to open the gate, or he's sick and can't. Either way it's bad. For if the gate isn't opened soon—away will go the mill!"

"That would be dreadful!" said Miss Lufkin.

"Well, I'm going up there and open the gate myself," declared Tim.

"But are you sure Jed doesn't answer the

telephone?" cried the woman. "Wait a minute, Tim," she cried as he was about to go out. "Let me ring him again."

Tim waited while, amid the crash, rumble and roar of the storm, the housekeeper tried to signal to the watchman in his shanty at the head of the lake, near the dam and flood-gate. But though the bell in the mill-house rang, there was no answering voice at the telephone.

"He can't be there," said Miss Lufkin in a low tone, while Dick and Janet wondered what would happen next.

Suddenly there was a louder crash of thunder, and sparks came from the telephone.

"The wire's struck!" cried Tim. "It's out of business now—it's broken! We can't get Jed now! I'll have to go up!"

"Will lightning strike the wireless?" Janet wanted to know.

"There's a lightning arrester in it," said Dick. "I heard Mr. Paletta say so. Lightning won't hurt it."

Tim opened the door and stepped out. As he did so a fierce gust of wind blew a shower of rain into the house.

“Oh, it’s a terrible night!” exclaimed Miss Lufkin. “I hate to have you go out.”

“It’s the only way,” Tim said. “The flood gate must be opened. If Jed isn’t there to do it—I must.”

He closed the door after him and shut out some of the sound of the storm. But in another instant the children and Miss Lufkin heard a cry of pain.

“It’s Tim—he’s hurt!” exclaimed the housekeeper. She flung open the door. In dashed more wind and rain, while the lightning flashed and the thunder rumbled. In the glare of the flashes they could see Tim lying on the ground near the steps.

“Were you struck?” cried the housekeeper.

“No, I slipped and fell,” was the groaning answer. “I’m afraid my leg is broken! Help me back into the house!”

With Dick’s help, Miss Lufkin managed to give Tim enough aid so that he could drag himself in on the floor. Then the door was closed against the storm.

“I must telephone for Dr. Hardy,” said the housekeeper.

“You can’t—the wire is gone—struck by

lightning," said the foreman. "But never mind me! You'll have to go up to the top of the hill and tell Jed to open the gate—the flood-gate must be opened soon or the mill will go. The lake is terrible high on account of all this rain. But—no—Jed isn't there! You'll have to open the gate yourself! Can you?"

"I—I'm afraid not," faltered the house-keeper. "But I can find a man somewhere and ask him to do it. I'll go up."

She began to look about for her bonnet and shawl. Dick and Janet had frightened faces. Janet was going to cry.

"You mustn't!" whispered Dick. "We must be—like soldiers—Jan—you know—the game mother plays!"

Janet's lips quivered, but she held back her tears.

A louder crash of thunder, fiercer lightning and more rain told how terrible was the storm.

"Its too bad to have you go out in it, Miss Lufkin," said Tim. "But I can't hardly crawl, let alone walk. And, as it is I'm afraid you won't be in time. Listen!"

A new and different roaring sound came to their ears.

“The water’s coming over the top of the dam—I can hear it in the gully!” said the foreman. “The dam won’t hold long now! The flood gate should be open!”

“I’ll open it myself!” cried the housekeeper.

“You can’t!” groaned Tim. “You never can do it! It’s two miles or more, up hill, to the gate house. In all this storm you’ll never make it. There’s no one else near here who could. No, we’ll just have to let the mill go, I’m thinking!”

“Will this house wash away?” asked Janet.

“No, dearie, not the house, just your uncle’s mill,” answered the foreman, who had propped himself up to lean against a chair as he sat on the floor. “The water will just wash away the flume, then it will tear out the mill wheel and the mill. But the water won’t come here on account of the big gully in between.”

The mill stood on one side of a deep ravine, or small valley, and the house on the other side. Between them rushed the flood water, flowing beneath a bridge Uncle Harry had built.

“Yes, the mill will go soon,” murmured Tim. “The dam can’t last much longer if the flood gate isn’t opened. And nobody can get up

there now to open the gate. The mill will go!"

Suddenly Dick, who had been thinking as hard as his little head could think, uttered a cry.

"What is it?" exclaimed Miss Lufkin.

"The wireless!" cried Dick, pointing to the new sending set that had been put in by Señor Paletta. "We can call him on the wireless? He can open the gate. He can save the mill!"

"Oh, yes!" joined in Janet. "Once he told me he opened the gate for the watchman. Señor Paletta knows how!"

"Oh—do you think so, Tim?" cried Miss Lufkin, clasping her hands.

The foreman looked at the two Wild Cherries.

"Do you know," he murmured, "I think that will do the trick. I think it will! If the mill is to be saved they'll do it! If we can get that foreigner on the wireless, and he opens the gate, the dam will hold and the mill will be saved. But I can't seem to work the wireless. I don't know how this one works!"

"Nor I!" said the housekeeper.

"But I do!" cried Dick.

"And I can help!" offered his sister.

Losing all fear, now, of the storm and the lightning which flashed outside, Dick went to the instruments and, doing as the inventor had showed him, turned the dials, threw in the switches and set the vacuum tubes glowing. The set was simple to operate and Dick and Janet had soon learned the trick of it. There was no danger of lightning for there was no aerial to this set.

Once he had the connections made, Dick rang a bell in the lonely shack of the "hermit." The bell was an ordinary electric one, operated by pushing a button.

There was a wait of a few seconds—a wait that was tense and filled with anxiety. The noise of the storm grew louder. The roar of angry waters filled the air outside. The lake was very high. The dam could not hold much longer.

Suddenly a voice came out of the new wireless loud speaker asking:

"What is it? Who is calling Señor Paletta? What is it?"

"This is Dick," answered the owner of the voice, turning the switch so that he could talk to the cabin on the hill. "This is Dick—one

of the Wild Cherries. Janet—the other Wild Cherry—she is here, too. Oh, the gate isn't open and the dam will break! Uncle Harry's mill will be washed away! Can you open the gate, Señor Paletta? We can't telephone the watchman 'cause the telephone is struck by lightning!"

Thus spoke Dick over the wireless.

There was another silence, broken only by the noise of the storm. And then, out of the horn, again came the voice of the inventor:

"Do not be afraid! I will open the big flood-gate. I will let the waters off so they will not break the dam. Do not be afraid! I will open the gate!"

There was a rattling, clanging, squeaking sound as, from his end, the inventor shut off the wireless current. And then Dick pulled out the switch and the vacuum tubes grew dark.

"If he will only be in time," murmured Tim, trying not to groan in pain.

They waited—an hour it seemed, though it was only a few minutes. All the while the storm raged without. Then came a signal—a signal that the inventor was about to speak over the wireless.

"Hello, Wild Cherries!" he called.

"Hello! Hello!" eagerly answered Dick and Janet.

"All is well," went on the voice. "I have the gate opened. The waters are going safely out the other way. The dam is safe! I will see you in the morning."

With a splutter the wireless ceased. Dick and Janet gave sighs of relief.

"The Wild Cherries saved the mill," murmured Tim. For the sound of the raging water was not so loud now in the flume ravine. The lake was rushing off through the safety flood-gate. "The Wild Cherries saved the mill!"

"Indeed they did!" echoed Miss Lufkin. "And now I must see about a doctor for you, Tim Gordon."

"No, I'll wait until morning," he said. "I don't believe my leg's broken after all, but it hurts a lot. I don't mind, though, for the mill is safe."

And so it was, for when morning came the water in the lake had fallen so low, because of running off through the flood-gate, that there was no more danger. Then came Señor Pa-

letta bringing Dr. Hardy to look at Tim's leg, and telling a story of how poor Jed North, in his lonely shanty, had been taken so ill that he could not go out to open the gate as he should have done.

"But I open him!" laughed the Italian. "I get myself all wet, but what I care? I open the gate for the Wild Cherries!"

Dick and Janet were very happy over what they had done. And they were much happier a few hours later when daddy and mother came back to say that Uncle Harry had been operated on in the hospital and was going to get well.

"I knew I could depend on my two brave little soldiers!" said Mother Cherry, as she patted them on the backs. For they don't kiss soldiers except in France—where, as I said, it is proper.

And so this is the story of the Wild Cherries in the country and of how they saved the mill. After the storm came pleasant happy days, and on one of the most beautiful, Uncle Harry came back from the hospital, almost well and strong again.

"I'll soon be able to work in my own mill—

my mill that Dick and Janet saved for me by wireless!" he laughed. "It was wonderful!"

Not long after this, when Uncle Harry was much better, Mr. Cherry said:

"We have enough money now, to pay off the mortgage. Business at the mill has been fine this summer."

"I am glad of that!" said Uncle Harry. "Now I do not need to worry any more. The Wild Cherries brought us good luck, I think."

"Indeed they did!" exclaimed Tim, who was able to limp about. "I had good luck, too. I might have broken my leg when I fell, but I only cut it, and it's getting better fast."

Every one was happy. Janet looked up at her mother and said:

"Do you remember what the Gipsy said; about danger in deep water?"

"Oh, yes, Madame Deborah's warning!" laughed Mrs. Cherry. "Well, it was partly true, wasn't it? There was danger in deep water. But then there always is, and she was only guessing when she spoke. She knew nothing of what was to happen."

"She didn't know Grunter, the pig, was go-

ing to dump us in the mud, did she, Jan?" asked Dick.

"No!" laughed his sister.

Then the Wild Cherries went out to play.

"Oh, Dick," said Janet a little later, "I feel so sorter funny and good, don't you?"

"Kinder," he confessed.

"I—I'd just like to do something—something wild, wouldn't you?" Janet went on.

"Um—huh!" mumbled Dick. "And I'm going to do it, too!"

"What you going to do?" cried Janet, as her brother ran down the road.

"I'm going to ride Gid's goat bareback like a cowboy!" declared Dick. And he did, too, for a little way, when Gid's goat tossed him off.

"But I don't care!" laughed the boy. "We're having fun, aren't we, Jan?"

"We sure are!" laughed the girl.

And I am going to tell you of some more fun the children had. But that must be put into another book. For this is as full as it can well be. In the next volume, to be called "Two Wild Cherries in the Woods," I shall tell you how Dick and Janet caught a bear.

THE END

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