

SONNY



CHARLES C. McMICHAEL



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SONNY.

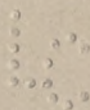
SONNY

BY

Charles C. McMichael

*The Story of a Dog That Had
Always Lived in a City, That
Found a Rich Experience Visiting
with Two Boys in the Country,*

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SONNY

A STORY FOR BOYS FROM
EIGHT TO EIGHTY

*"As I approve of a youth that has
something of the Old Man in him,
so I am no less pleased with an Old
Man that has something of the Youth"*

TR.—CICERO

\$1.00

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To
GEORGE and WILLIAM
I Dedicate This Volume

m. v. g. Ja. 23-17.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The characters and events in this story are drawn from life—Sonny is a real dog; George and William are real boys. The writer has not an imagination that could hook up the ridiculous predicaments into which Sonny and the two boys are constantly falling, or the happenings that are consequent upon their innocent blunders.

I ought to say, however, in justice to the boys, and the dog too, for that matter, that not all happenings should be attributed to them. As a matter of fact the story is a composite one, being made up of the experiences of several individuals. I have chosen, however, for the sake of the story, to make George and William the chief actors, in as much as the major portion of the story must be charged back to balance up the account of two boys that "Call me daddy. That's all!"

THE AUTHOR.

*“Blessings on thee, dog of mine
Pretty collars make thee fine,
 Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
 Nevermore, to pat thee.”*

* * * * *

*“Leap! thy broad tail waves a light;
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasseled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
 Down their golden inches.”*

—BROWNING.

CHAPTER ONE.

SONNY.

Sonny had always lived in Chicago. He was the only heir apparent of a household, the head of which is a reporter on a Chicago daily and the mistress of which had all the time necessary to comb and brush him daily, give him a bath twice a week and keep his locks as best befit the pup.

His breeding was much talked about. He is part bird-dog, of the English-Setter variety, as is manifest by his white coat with blue spots predominating in the under color throughout his body. His ears are large and the blue-black silken locks that adorn them glisten in the sunlight. But to those up in Dogology it is distinctly manifest that the major portion of blood that courses through his veins is just dog. This, however, did not lessen the affection which

his mistress had for him. Aside from her husband, Sonny was the only object of the household upon which she could bestow affection, and consequently he received an undue amount of attention.

His chief occupation was to sit upon a cushioned window seat and view the passersby from a second story flat. He lounged about upon rugs and couch pillows at will and at night slept upon the foot of the bed of his mistress, covered and tucked away as "snug as a bug in a rug." He was given an open air outing every day, but the only liberties which he enjoyed were those bounded by a six-foot chain. His associations with other canines was very limited, for any attentions shown other dogs were met with a stern rebuke and he was toddled along on his journey.

If perchance he got his feet wet or muddy when on his daily walks, he was taught to wait at the door until they were wiped and he was otherwise made fit for admission. He was taught to say his prayers by bowing his head until the "Amen" from his mistress

completed the performance. He was given a chair at the dining table and received his food from the hands of his master or mistress. If perchance he struck a bone, he at once proceeded to a rug which had been prepared for his individual needs, where it was dispatched, whereupon he would again resume his seat at the table.

The candy kitchen was visited daily and Sonny shared the sweetmeats and fared sumptuously every day. His favorite treat was an ice cream cone, which he ate from the hands of his mistress as delicately as do most children, and he would smack his lips and bark for more when the first was gone. If it was thought best to allow him a second cone it was procured for him.

This high life, however, was not the best for Sonny for he had frequent brashes. Nevertheless every indisposition was quickly set right, for he was at once hustled off to the hospital where his ailments were treated, the cost never being counted, for money was

lavishly expended to make him comfortable and happy. Upon his return there was rejoicing over his home coming. As a result of such surroundings he was a genuinely spoiled dog.

Sonny, however, grew restless. When on his daily walks his actions showed all too clearly that he needed a change of environment. Discontent gradually grew upon him for the silver spoon born in his mouth had lost its charm. It was finally decided that Sonny should go visiting. Accordingly, his mistress arranged for a visit with her sister in Coshocton, Ohio, who has two boys. It was thought that if Sonny could share the sports of the two boys for a season it would probably be beneficial to him.

Arrangements having been made, Sonny was given his bath, his silken locks were combed and a dainty blue ribbon drawn through the links of his silver collar adorned his neck and he was ready for the trip.

His journey in the baggage car was a sad contrast



George and William.

to the rich tapestries and cushions which he had left at home. The smoke, cinders and dust, too, had a telling effect upon his white coat. It was a new experience to him. He was offered a chicken lunch at Columbus, Ohio, but he was so nervous he could not eat. When he arrived in Coshocton he was pretty well worn out, but he was given a royal welcome at the hands of the two boys who had been waiting anxiously for his coming. He was given a good bed on cushions and on the following morning he was as bright as a new dollar.

George and William are the two boys who were to entertain Sonny. They are genuinely good boys but full of all the characteristics that go to make up a boy—two veritable sunbeams constantly darting through the shadows to transform them into the joys that make life worth living. They are as constant in their search for pleasure—claiming their rightful share of the real, happy life—as were the ancients in quest of the “Golden Fleece.”

They are, nevertheless, subject to all the frailties that link them with humanity. They have had their share of stubbed toes, measles, itch and mumps. They have been licked by the older boys and have pulled weeds in the garden when the fishing was fine and much more to their liking. They have been spanked for picking the frosting off of their mother's cake and sent to bed early when their sister has a beau.

But through it all their sense of humor, and sometimes wit, prevails and their cares are tossed aside to grasp for the speckled beauties that dangle constantly before them and lure them on in their bewildering maze of innocent, rollicking fun.

When they heard that Sonny was coming they began their plans to write a few new chapters in their book of beginnings. They never had owned a dog and their childish fancy pictured whole worlds of fun with him.

George is fourteen and William is ten. They had acquainted their chums down town of Sonny's coming,

with whom it had been arranged to bring him down and show him off as soon as he arrived. George and William had had many a chuckle about Aunty's dog which they proposed to bring up in the way he should go, for, as George put it, "Aunt Lucy don't know anything about bringing up dogs anyway."

*“How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of Beginnings, Story without End,
Each maid a heroine and each man a friend.”*

—LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE EMANCIPATION.

Bright and early the next morning the two boys were ready for their first day's outing. But Aunt Lucy protested against Sonny being taken out until he be given a bath, thoroughly dried and combed.

The forenoon wore heavily away for the two boys while Sonny was undergoing his preparations to make his debut in the new city. He was ready to go at noon. George and William were called to dinner, but both were so anxious to get started that neither of the boys ate anything worth speaking about. Sonny was in about the same boat for he must have thought that something was in the wind. The chain was finally placed in George's hand with specific instructions from Aunty to take good care of Sonny, not to let him get hurt or muddy, for callers were

expected that afternoon and Sonny must show up at his best.

Sonny's white coat fairly glistened in the sunlight of a February day and a brand new ribbon adorned his collar as upon the day previous. Each boy was given a sandwich, and an extra one for Sonny, and a dime each for candy, a part of which the dog was to share. The boys listened intently to Aunt Lucy's instructions which began to assume the length of the moral code, and their convictions about her foolish notions over her dog were confirmed. Frequently William would shove up behind George to hide his chuckling face, for instructions kept pouring forth as if they had been recited to a record of a phonograph and was now being turned loose on the boys.

"Finally Brethren," as Aunt Lucy puts it, the boys got started. The sun was shining bright and it had warmed considerably since early morn. A slush extended from curb to curb, resulting from the melting ice and snow, while as yet the walks were a glare

of ice. George and William were in high spirits as they started down the street busily chatting and speculating about how Sonny would show up. A bend in the street soon took them out of sight of the house and once here the chain was unsnapped and for the first time in his life he was a free dog.

Sonny was wild with delight. Half crazed with his liberties, he ran frantically about, up to and away from the boys, whom he evidently regarded as his liberators—his emancipation had come. Scarcely a square was passed until Sonny spied his first dog. He was just ahead on the side walk down a steep incline. After him Sonny went pelmell with both boys in hot pursuit, yelling, "Sick! Sick!"

Sonny was not acquainted with this vernacular, and was only in for fun. The dog in the lead heard him coming and turned about to see what was doing. Sonny tried to stop, but couldn't. Down the icy pavement he slid and smashed into his adversary with all the force of a head-on collision. Sonny was

clinched by his foe and given a polite little shake, but neither dog was much in for fight and not much resulted. Sonny got a cut over one eye, got up, shook himself and started off for a new deal.

George and William were pretty thoroughly disgusted with the outcome of this round, for they expected to clean up the town on short notice with Sonny. However, they pushed on down the street and stopped at a candy store to invest their dimes.

While in here the dog missed the boys and ran frantically about trying to locate them. They came out of the store just in time to see him collide with another dog as he turned the corner. This was the second collision which he had experienced. The two clinched and a clever little scrap ensued. This time Sonny showed some fight and came off victor without a scratch.

These were new experiences and Sonny was beginning to enjoy real dog life. He was given a share

of the candy, a pat on the head, and the boys started on down town where boys and dogs began to be thicker.

Sonny was suddenly halted by another adversary. A little dog swearing was indulged in and scrap number three was on.

This time Sonny was in for blood and a fierce conflict followed. The boys had heard of dog fights but had never witnessed the genuine article. In a short time there were no less than half a dozen dogs in the deal with a circle of small boys about to see how the new dog would show up. Pandemonium reigned. There was the gnashing of teeth, the savage growl and bark of some, and a howl from one in the bunch with Sonny in the bottom of the pile. George proposed to stop the fight.

“Let ’em alone,” shouted a small boy in the circle, “or I’ll—”

“No you won’t,” retorted George. “If you interfere I’ll give you what the under dog in the fight is getting. There’s no fun in seeing anything get hurt.”

Whereupon George watched his chance, got Sonny by the hind leg and pulled him out of the fight. He was considerably used up. One ear was bleeding, one foot was hurt and his coat was bedrabbled from the slush of the street.

“Gee, what will Aunt Lucy say when she sees Sonny?” asked William.

“Oh, never mind,” answered George. “We’ll take him to the barn and turn the hose on him. That will clean him up. We will get Helen to give us another ribbon for his collar and when he is dried we will brush him and he will be all right.”

This thought put the boys in pretty good spirits and they started home. They stopped at the barn to do the chores and clean up Sonny. A Jersey cow and calf occupied a box stall. They were let out separately to go to the hydrant for water. Sonny was pretty well limbered up from his three scraps by his trip home and was making himself generally conspicuous about the barn. The stall door was slid back

and Jersey came out, and the door then closed, but by chance did not slide clear back.

This was the first time Sonny had ever seen a cow, and the first time the cow had ever seen Sonny. Both cow and dog stopped and looked in blank amazement at each other. Then with a snort and swing of her head, Jersey made for Sonny. In his scramble to get away from the cow, he dodged through the crack in the stall door, not knowing that the calf was inside, and the calf not knowing that the dog was outside. Like a shot out of a gun he made his escape from the cow, only to land under the feet of the astonished calf. A stampede followed, each trying to get out of the road of the other, Sonny half howling, half barking, and the calf bellowing and scrambling. Sonny slipped and fell in the filth of the stall and likewise did the calf. Sonny finally made his escape back through the door, gave the cow the slip and got safe in front of the barn where he wheeled about and barked to a fare-you well.

This was the most genuine sport the boys had had. As he stood there barking the boys were splitting their sides laughing at his appearance as contrasted with the condition which he had left the house a couple of hours previous.

His head was well covered with blood from his bleeding ear, one eye was swollen nearly shut from his first conflict, he had one game foot, his entire coat was bedrabbled with mud and slush from the street, and one side was besmirched with the filth which he had mopped up off the stable floor. But Sonny seemed to be enjoying it as much as were the boys.

“I wonder what Aunt Lucy would think about his change of environment if she could see him now?” queried George.

“I don’t know what change of en-en-en— What did you say, George? What does that mean?” asked William.

George tried to make himself understood by explaining that “change of environment” meant to be placed where he finds out and sees new things.

“Well,” said William, “he has found out some new things today all right. He has seen ‘a few’ too. But what will Aunt Lucy say?”

“Never mind Aunt Lucy. We’ll clean him up as soon as we have a little more fun,” replied George.

Sonny had one more ordeal to pass through before he was to be introduced to the hose. That was the can to the tail. The boys had heard of the sport but had never witnessed it, and not knowing what might happen, it was decided to take him inside the barn and close the door.

While George was attaching the can both boys were guessing what would happen.

“Will this be some more of that ‘change of ’vironment?’ ” asked William.

“I suppose so,” said George, as he drew the last loop which attached the can, and the dog was off.

Not much attention was paid to the can at first, as the boys had sat down upon the straw at the rear of the barn where the ceremony of applying the can

had been gone through. Sonny went trotting about very little concerned and a look of disappointment stole over each of the boys' faces as they watched for developments. However, Sonny soon struck the cement floor of the barn. Here the can began to rattle and for the first time the dog began to realize that the can was following him.

In a remarkably short time Sonny began to show speed. Round number one was completed and as the speed increased, the can began to pound all the louder upon the floor, against the ends of the stalls as he passed, buggy spokes and other obstacles in the path of the race. It seemed to the boys that Sonny was doing his best. But the can began to bound like a ball, and every few jumps Sonny would get a bump on his rump and the third round brought out more speed and noise than ever. Sonny was getting scared and began to yelp. Horses' heads began to go up and the boys were amazed at the wild race Sonny was now making. He fairly flew.

"Gee, look at him go!" shouted William.

"Wouldn't he make a rabbit go some if he were after one now?" replied George.

The boys began to shout at Sonny. Jersey and the calf became excited, horses were snorting, the dog was yelping and it sounded as if a whole menagerie had been turned loose in the barn.

But Sonny was growing desperate and alas for the boys, he spied a way of escape through a ventilator in the rear of the barn. Through it he flew. The can, catching on the side of the ventilator as he made his exit, broke the string which held the can, but did not loosen the loop of the string on Sonny's tail. Not missing the can, Sonny broke for the house yelping at every jump. Their sister, Helen, heard the commotion and opened the door to see what was going on just as Sonny lit on the porch. Before anyone could tell what had happened, Sonny spied his mistress, who was gowned in her best in a circle of callers, and at a single bound landed at her feet and cuddled

down, trembling in deadly terror from this experience.

The callers had never heard of Sonny and they were dumbfounded for Aunt Lucy shrieked in wild astonishment over Sonny's sad plight. A stampede followed and there was now about as much commotion in the house as there had been in the barn a moment previous. The boys saw what had happened, heard the tumult inside and concluded to go up to their Uncle's to stay over night until the first fury of the storm would subside at home.

*“Oh who, when fading of itself away,
Would cloud the sunshine of his little day;
Now is the May of life. Careering round,
Joy wings his feet, joy lifts him from the
ground.”*

—ROGERS.

CHAPTER THREE.

THE ADOPTION.

The next morning as George and William left their Uncle's they were speculating as to what kind of a reception they would receive at home. Half an hour's walk brought them to the scene of their first day's adventure with Sonny. With fear and trembling they pushed open the kitchen door to find Aunt Lucy combing and brushing Sonny.

At the sight of the boys the dog leaped to greet their return and twisted himself into all kinds of friendly contortions at their appearance.

He ran to George, reared up upon his hind legs and placed his fore paws upon George's chest as much as to say, "Come on, let's try it again."

George threw his arms about him and hugged him and lifted him from the floor as he waltzed about over

the floor with him in return for the welcome accorded him.

When George released him, Sonny ran to William and was no less demonstrative in his greetings. William was a little light in weight to withstand the unexpected reception and when Sonny's paws landed upon William's chest, William went sprawling backwards. But he had thrown his arms about the dog's neck and boy and dog went rolling on the floor, Sonny scrambling to get away and William struggling to get on top. The wrestling match began to take on a humorous aspect for there was soon a strange admixture of boy, dog and floor rugs all in a confused heap, stirring up a commotion which would make a close second to the final act of the first day's experiences.

These manifestations of Sonny over the return of the boys nearly broke Aunt Lucy's heart. She had petted and toted him about, combed and brushed him, had fed him upon the fat of the land, and while

he always manifested an affection for his mistress, yet never once in his life had he made such a demonstration upon her return.

It was well for the boys that matters had turned out in this manner, for Aunt Lucy had fussed and fumed the whole evening before upon the "outlandish abuse of Sonny" at the hands of the two boys, and she had a curtain lecture all prepared for the boys. Their mother, too, had a hand in cleaning up Sonny and in assisting her sister in administering the dog's bath.

Aunt Lucy never said a word to the boys as they entered for Sonny broke up the whole line of lecture that she had in store for the boys by his reception of them.

Their mother heard the scrambling of William and Sonny upon the floor and came in to see what it was all about for the boys had come in so quietly that she did not know of their return. As she entered the kitchen, she saw the scramble on the floor and

Aunt Lucy began to smile over the situation. This changed the attitude of the mother and she caught up the good humor of her sister and soon both were laughing over the mixup on the floor.

“Well Kittie,” said Aunt Lucy as she addressed her sister by her pet family name, “I guess that all my painstaking for Sonny to make him different from other dogs is of no avail. Just look at the way he greeted the boys upon their return after the horrible plight that they got him into yesterday afternoon. I took him to the sea shore with me and with me on my auto trips; I fed him upon the choicest of food, candy and ice cream, have petted him and held him in my lap by the hour, kept cushions for him to lounge about upon, have combed and brushed him and to see how he takes on over the boys after his troubles of yesterday makes me thoroughly disgusted with him. If a hog’s a hog, I guess a dog’s a dog.”

“What’s that Aunt Lucy,” asked George. “Did you say that you are disgusted with Sonny? Well,

there are a couple of boys that aren't, I can tell you, and if you are disgusted with him thoroughly enough to want to get rid of him, we'll take him and take good care of him, too."

"Yes! It looks like it," retorted Aunt Lucy. "Take good care of him! What in the world did you do with him yesterday that got him into such a mess?"

"Why, Aunt Lucy, we didn't do anything. Sonny started all of his own troubles. He got into three fights down town and—"

"Three fights!" exclaimed Aunt Lucy.

"Yes, and if I hadn't been on hand for the last one he would have been chewed up to a finish. I tell you I saved him from a complete licking."

"Well, that's worse and more of it," said Aunt Lucy, and some of her curtain lecture began to return to her.

"Well, you ought to see Sonny in a fight Aunt Lucy. He's some scrapper, believe me. If he had a little experience he would make a hummer for he's

got the sand all right. The first fight didn't amount to much. That was right down here by the Fire Department on Cambridge street. But the next dog he tanned in short notice. But the last fight wasn't fair, for there were five dogs on top of him and I pulled him out."

"Five dogs on Sonny at once? Well, it's no wonder he was used up. Why this is simply terrible! I say it's terrible and—"

"No, Aunt Lucy," interrupted George, "Sonny is all right. He isn't the least bit sore and that's nothing at all. I have been so sore for a week after some of my troubles with boys that I could hardly navigate, and now Sonny is as limber as if he had had no fights at all. And you know, Aunt Lucy, you wanted Sonny's environment changed and you can see by his actions this morning how it set with him. If we had him for awhile, we would make a real dog out of him. Say, Aunt Lucy, give Sonny to us. He don't like to live in a flat where you live. He ought to be out with us."

“What! Give Sonny away?”

“Yes, Aunt Lucy,” said William, who had ended his scuffle with Sonny on the floor. “You can see how he likes us, and we will take good care of him and you can come down and see him if you get homesick for him, and we can send him by express to you for a visit once in awhile. Won’t you please?”

William was now at Aunt Lucy’s knee and he threw his arms about her neck and kissed her and said, “Won’t you please?”

Things had taken a sudden turn. A few moments before Aunt Lucy was calling to her mind all the adjectives in her vocabulary, and if we knew the facts, perhaps some more befitting masculine lips, to hurl at the boys upon their return, for their abuse of Sonny, and now she was debating in her own mind a serious question.

The mother knew that Sonny was not altogether a success in the flat, and she helped along the argument of the boys by suggesting that she leave him for awhile at any rate with the boys.

Aunt Lucy and the boys prolonged the argument for nearly an hour and the boys finally won. Aunt Lucy took the philosophical view of the situation and told Sonny to "Go it," and turned him over to the boys for keeps. Sonny was formally adopted and the two boys were rich in their new possession.

When Aunt Lucy started home she shed real tears as she bade Sonny good-bye, but consoled herself with the thought that Sonny was happy.

*“Oh! the joy
Of young ideas painted on the mind,
In the warm glowing colors fancy spreads
On subjects not yet known, when all is new,
And all is lively.”*

—HANNAH MORE.

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE INITIATION

The boys at once set about to teach Sonny some tricks. He was apt and many a dog in the ring was not more clever than he after he developed.

He was taught to play the old man act, sit erect with cap and spectacles on and smoke a pipe; he was taught to "fall dead" after the toy pistol got in its work and remain limp until given an opportunity to get up. At the signal "catch your tail" he would fly about in a circle and to all intents and purposes he would make a desperate attempt to catch it, barking and flying about in a circle until dizzy, whereupon he would turn about and run in the opposite direction and unwind himself. He learned to ride a horse and hold the reins in his mouth; he was taught to leap through a hoop covered with paper; he was taught to

race with the boys. On a handicap hundred-yard dash the boys would take twenty, twenty-five or thirty yards stand ahead and at count "three" he was off like a shot. But he didn't always wait for "three," for he seemed to know what there was in taking the advantage, and the farther the boys were in the lead, the more anxious he was to get off and the less apt to wait for the third count.

His favorite sport, however, was playing leap frog with a string of boys, taking his turn in line. Many a little fellow, however, was tumbled over upon his nose, for Sonny weighed about fifty pounds and when he would take his run and jump down upon the boys as they leaned over in the game, the fifty pounds not infrequently proved too much for the youngsters, and boy, dog, and all would take a tumble in the street.

Another kind of sport for Sonny was coasting. The surrounding country abounded in hills and Sonny was taught to pull the sled up the hill. But

once up, Sonny was the first on the sled to coast down with the boys. He always sat in front and the faster the sled would go, the harder he would brace himself against the boys to keep himself from falling off. If the boys went "belly-whopper" Sonny was crouched down on top, barking as hard as he could bark. He soon learned what the race on the hill-side meant, and so surely as any sled overtook George or William, and to Sonny's mind was going to outstrip them, Sonny would leap from the sled, catch Mr. Boy by the pant leg and ditch him every time and then run ahead and bark to the foot of the hill.

Last and most fascinating to the boys Sonny was taught to hunt. Being part bird-dog he took to it like a "duck to water." The boys themselves knew very little about hunting and Sonny developed pretty much to suit himself. With the boys it was their joy to see him chase the rabbit.

However, some neighbor boys helped George and William and he finally developed into a fairly good

hunter. He was taught in hunting rabbits always to go upon the further side of the brush heap from the boys before he began barking. This, of course, brought the rabbit out from the brush heap towards the boys, and gave them an opportunity to shoot the rabbit before Sonny would have time to get after it, for in spite of all that could be done the habit of chasing the rabbit had become so rooted in his nature that it never left him.

One evening before school was out a doctor visiting with the boys' parents, asked to take the dog hunting. He got the gun and he and the dog were soon in the fields. In a short time Sonny "jumped" a rabbit. The doctor shot at it, but poor Sonny got the charge of shot instead of the rabbit.

The doctor was horrified when he saw Sonny go tumbling instead of the rabbit and he ran to him. Sonny was stunned and very sick. The doctor picked him up in his arms and carried him to the house.

When the mother saw him she was heart-sick for

she knew that the boys would be considerably broken up if Sonny did not recover.

The doctor assured her that the dog was not seriously hurt, though one side was well covered with blood. He got a pan of warm water and began caring for his patient as carefully as though he had a surgical operation in the hospital.

When his wounds were dressed the mother had a small featherbed which she spread in one corner of the room upon which Sonny was placed. He was then covered with a warm blanket.

When the boys came from school William was crying and George excited, for news of the accident had spread as rapidly as though it had been a person that had been shot, for Sonny had made friends far and wide with his clever tricks. The boys knew of the accident and came running in to see the condition of their only possession. Sonny, however, was so sick he would not lift his head from his pillow. But he did manage to wag his tail a time or two as it was not under cover.

The doctor assured the boys that Sonny would get well and William began smiling through his tears, and said: "Guess Sonny wasn't hit in the tail, for he could wag that all right."

That night George and William sat by Sonny's bed until he was sound asleep before they went to their bed. They offered him milk, meat, water, candy and everything that they could think of, but he would not eat. The doctor told the boys that he would be better by morning and he would then probably eat something.

The next morning the boys were up bright and early. As they entered the room where Sonny lay, he raised his head as if to say, "Boys, I'm better." This revived the boys' spirits and they felt that recovery was in sight.

After breakfast the boys got him to eat a little and drink some water, and it had a reviving effect upon him. The next day Sonny was able to hobble about, and in a week he was as lively as ever. This

experience the boys never forgot, and it brought out all the human element in both of them as they cared for and aided in the recovery of their supremest joy.

Aunt Lucy never knew of this accident to the knowledge of the boys. In all their letters to their aunt this chapter in Sonny's life was always omitted.

As the days came and went their attachment to the dog became stronger and stronger. One day trouble arose and George was giving Sonny a whipping. He had him by the loose hide back of the neck and poor Sonny got a good trouncing.

William took offense at this and took George to task for whipping his dog.

"Sonny isn't your dog, I guess," retorted George.

"Well, he isn't your dog, either," replied William, "for Aunt Lucy gave him to both of us."

"Well, then, one-half of him is mine," said George.

"Well, I own the other half," said William, "and I don't want you licking my half of the dog."

"Well, then, I suppose that you want the tail end

for your half of the dog, and that's all right; I'll take the head end." Accordingly the dog was divided, George claiming the head and William the tail end.

This arrangement, however, did not settle matters, for William persisted in handling his half of the dog to suit himself. He seemed to get more fun out of tying tin cans, sticks and bunches of straw to Sonny's tail than fourteen small boys all put together could get out of a circus. As a matter of fact it became so common that one day a bunch of boys caught Sonny up town and they tied a stick to his tail. But Sonny reached about, got the stick in his mouth and trotted home for George to loosen from his tail.

This division of the dog was finally abandoned and a joint partnership thereafter proved more satisfactory, George considering himself worsted in the deal, as he objected very strenuously to William's tin can propensities, and William demanding that he would do what he pleased with his half of the dog.

Sonny was a great rogue at play. If George and

William were wrestling, Sonny would jump in and catch the first pant leg that he came to and shake it as if he were going to tear every stitch of clothing off of his victim. One day the doctor who had shot Sonny was teasing William and he picked William up and tossed him to arm's length toward the ceiling. Sonny joined in the fun and got the doctor by the pant leg and gave a shake that ripped it to the knee. The doctor took a laugh over it and concluded that Sonny was evening up for the load of shot he was carrying.

The boys and dog became inseparable and Sonny seemed to get as much fun out of all their pranks as the boys did themselves.

*“Blest hour of childhood! Then, and then alone,
Dance we the revels close round pleasure’s throne,
Quaff the bright nectar from her fountain-springs
And laugh beneath the rainbow of her wings.”*

—ANON.

CHAPTER FIVE.

SECOND DEGREE HILARITY

When Summer came the boys went to visit Grandma, and what didn't happen during their stay isn't worth telling for Sonny was always in the game.

As the boys opened the gate and ran to the house to greet Grandma and Grandpa, Sonny rushed in ahead to strike a snag the "first dash out of the box."

Puss and Tom and their family of three half-grown kittens were all asleep under the stove. Sonny "made a pass" at the bunch. As he went under one side of the stove, the cats went out from the other side. The screen door was hooked and the cats could not get out. Grandma's table was set for dinner, and that was their only hope of salvation. Upon it Tom flew and the rest of the cat family followed suit,

all spitting and growling, and Sonny barking in hot pursuit. Tom landed in the dish of apple butter and Puss in the dish of cottage cheese, and the kittens in their sputter upset the cream pitcher and other dishes in their road.

Grandma made for the broom and Grandpa for the boot-jack. Sonny was seized by the back of the neck and given a good introduction to Grandpa's vengeance, while Grandma cleared the house of the cats with the broom. Grandma then got a case-knife and began scraping up the apple butter and cheese which the cats had tracked over the clean table cloth. Grandma was provoked but did not display any disturbance over the affair. Fortunately, the stewed chicken, mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy and vegetables were still in the cooking utensils, and in a short time another set of dishes and a clean table cloth were in place and dinner was ready.

The boys were considerably disturbed over the affair. Notwithstanding the appreciation which they

had for Grandma's good dinner, William was so worked up that he began to cry. This melted Grandpa's heart and Sonny was readmitted to the house and given a chair beside William. This cleared up the situation. Sonny fared as sumptuously as did the boys and his winning ways soon restored him to favor with both Grandpa and Grandma, and Grandma decided that the boys were not to blame for the affair for they should have known better than to have had the cats in the house when they knew Sonny was coming.

After dinner the boys went with their Grandpa to the barn. Here was a multitude of new experiences for Sonny. He was here, there, and everywhere, except where he ought to have been and always in trouble.

Just before starting for the hay field, the boys put Sonny into the corn crib to clean out the rats. The boys discovered some wasp's nests on the rafters and with a fish pole pushed through the cracks from

the outside broke them loose. This infuriated the wasps. Sonny was the only living thing in sight and accordingly the object of attack. In a moment he was beset with the swarm. Sonny broke for the door, and not seeing the boys he ran to Grandpa for relief with the wasps after him. In a moment Grandpa was fighting wasps with his straw hat and kicking about as lively as Sonny, who was rolling on his back and snapping at the little pests that were making life miserable for both man and dog. The boys saw what had happened and were peeking around the corner of the corn crib between chuckles while they watched Grandpa, as George put it, give the "wasp dance."

Grandpa was an old blue-stockings Presbyterian but the event proved too much for him. He forgot all about his church connections and the language he used following the skirmish would not look well in print, so we pass it up.

The horses were bridled and brought out to be

hooked up to the wagon to go to the hay field. Dick was the first horse out of the stable, next old Gin, and last of all the colt. Sonny was so busy caring for the stings which the wasps had given him he did not notice anything that was going on. The colt was sauntering about and spied Sonny. He approached very cautiously with neck outstretched and nostrils distended, not knowing what might happen. The colt was half doubtful and stopped to size up the situation. Sonny was still busy with his troubles and did not know that there was a colt within fifty miles of him. The colt picked up fresh courage and ventured very cautiously to within a foot of the dog. He gave a snort. Sonny thought his end had come and, with a yelp, was upon his feet. This frightened the colt, which took to its heels and started down the road. Sonny turned after him, yelping and barking, and the two went down the pike, leaving behind a cloud of dust that soon hid them from sight.

This got Grandpa to going right. He was still

smarting from the hot reception he had received from the wasps, and now the colt was gone—no one knew where, and it must be gone after if there was not a forkful of hay put up the rest of the day.

Grandpa mounted old Gin and started after the run-away colt. Gin had seen twenty-five Summers. Her coat, originally a dapple gray, was now faded into a flea-bitten white. She was lame in one hind leg and stiff in the other three.

Grandpa was a long, lean, lank Yankee. He wore a pair of blue overalls which parted company with the tops of his socks, which were wrinkled about the tops of the shoes, leaving about six inches of Nature's garb in his lower extremities exposed to view. He wore a blue checked shirt with sleeves rolled to the elbows and a red bandanna about his neck. A broad-brimmed straw hat shaded a clean-shaven face, which usually wore a pleasant appearance, but which was now knit with rage.

As he lit astride he planted his heels into old Gin's

sides and the two started in pursuit of the run-away colt. Gin had seen the day when she could develop some speed and Grandpa was determined to rejuvenate her if possible, while she was about as anxious to overtake the colt as was Grandpa. She at once did her best, and with a limp and a leap, she carried Grandpa down the road with his long legs dangling, his loose shirt and broad-brimmed hat flapping in the breeze, and with elbows that conformed to the unequal motions of old Gin.

“Gee,” cried George, “wouldn’t that get you?”

“Yes,” responded William, “but isn’t this some more of that change of ’vironment for Sonny?”

“Yes, but he had better stay away from Grandpa,” said George, “for I can see trouble ahead.”

Half a mile down the road Grandpa met Sonny coming back but the colt was nowhere in sight. When Sonny got back to the boys, they concluded the best thing to do was to get Sonny out of Grandpa’s sight.

Two miles down the road Grandpa overtook the colt and started homeward fully determined to lock up Sonny. But when he got back, neither boys nor dog was in sight and things about the barn had settled down to a normal state of affairs. Grandpa finally got the horses hooked up and he and the hand put in the rest of the day in the hay field.

“In folly’s cup still laughs the bubble joy.”

—POPE.

CHAPTER SIX.

THIRD DEGREE COMPLEXITY.

The boys concluded to make themselves scarce about the premises for awhile, in order to shield Sonny from any molestation from Grandpa until he be given an opportunity to cool down, and they decided to go swimming and otherwise amuse themselves until supper would be ready.

They scampered down the lane, across the railway track to the creek. The water was clear and warm and soon the boys and dog were having all kinds of fun. Sonny was ducked several times. He could out-swim either of the boys, and as he would overtake them and come swimming up by the boys, his sharp claws would scratch their backs and make life in the water miserable for them. Sonny would then be seized and ducked but usually the boys got the

worst of the deal, and they finally decided that Sonny came out on top.

The bell rang for supper and every person headed for the house.

Grandpa and Grandma were known in the community as the Chaperings. They lived in a stately, old colonial mansion half a mile from a small village. To the boys it was paradise itself, but as they came up the lane from the old swimming pool they were not quite sure about what kind of a temper they would find Grandpa in; so instead of going to the barn, where Sonny was likely to have more trouble, they went straight to the house where Grandma received them with all the affection known to her good nature.

The boys proposed to play strong with Grandpa, so they cut a piece off the end of Grandma's clothesline, which, of course, made it too short on one end to reach the post, and had Sonny tied to the handle of the wash boiler, which was nearly full of water

left over from wash day. The boys got ready for supper and when Grandpa and the hand appeared the boys were as neat as pins and Sonny was curled up asleep as if nothing had gone wrong.

It was a grandstand play for the boys. Grandpa forgot all about the troubles at noon. His characteristic Yankee smile that stole over his face as he sized up the situation demonstrated to the boys that everything was coming their way.

After supper the boys went to the barn to help do the chores but Sonny was left behind. About thirty minutes later, Sonny got on the anxious seat and tried to get away. He gave two or three pulls but found he was tied secure and he gave it up for a bad job.

The cows were brought in from pasture and Grandpa and Grandma got busy with their milking. Grandpa sat upon the milking stool, stretched his long legs crosswise under the cow and held the pail between his legs while milking.

Sonny grew desperate at being left alone and gave a bound that overturned the boiler, spilled the water and Sonny was off, wash-boiler and all. This was far worse than the tin can to the tail. Of course, he made for the barn, creating enough excitement to stir up the whole neighborhood, to say nothing of the consternation he spread about the barnyard. Grandpa's hearing was considerably impaired and he did not hear distinctly enough to guess what was going on until Sonny turned about the corner of the barn.

Pigs, ducks, chickens and cows—everything broke loose. Before Grandpa could assemble himself his cow had started with the rest of the herd. Her hind legs caught under Grandpa's and he was tumbled over and given a milk shower bath. His eyes, ears, face and clothes were at once covered and he went rolling with the bucket. Sonny flew past with the wash boiler after him, which, of course, cleared the barnyard of everything except Grandma, Grandpa

and the boys. Sonny made another circuit, back through the open gate and down the road in the direction he had taken the colt at noon. The boys saw him going, but could not decide whether Sonny was taking the wash boiler down the road or whether the wash boiler was just following along behind. At any rate he was gone.

Grandpa gathered himself up and began clearing his eyes and ears of the milk and with his long scrawny forefinger scraped the milk from his forehead. He ran his fingers through his long hair and squeezed what he could out of that. He squared himself about and said:

“Well, Rose Ann, this beats me!”

When she saw how cool he was taking it, she began to laugh over the situation, and William called out:

“Grandpa, you are sure enough a milk man now.”

The dog was gone. George and William started in pursuit, while Grandma and Grandpa began to reassemble the barnyard inhabitants and finish the chores.

About dusk the boys and Sonny came back to the house. A rough place in the tin handle of the wash boiler finally cut the rope and freed Sonny and he started back and met the boys.

Grandpa, much to the surprise of the boys, treated the whole affair as a joke. The lamp was lighted and Grandpa began amusing the boys with pioneer tales. George had had considerable history in school and was very much interested in the tales of adventure in the early days. To William, however, it did not count for much and he lay down on the carpet and with his head on Sonny was soon fast asleep.

Grandma was busy with her mending and did not discover that William had fallen asleep until the old hall clock struck ten. Looking up over her spectacles, she exclaimed:

“Well, Jack! Just look at that boy. Pick him up and bring him upstairs while I go ahead and fix the bed.”

Grandma led the way to the upstairs where an

old-fashioned bed with curtains drawn about the legs and a canopy overhanging awaited the boys. A feather bed was one of the luxuries at Grandma's and soon both George and William were lost to their troubles.

Notwithstanding the excitement which Sonny had created during the day, he was permitted to sleep in the room with them. Sonny was about as worn out as the boys were and was ready for a good night's rest.

“ What’s i’ the air?

*Some subtle spirit runs through all my veins,
Hope seems to ride this morning on the wind,
And joy outshines the sun.”*

—PROCTOR.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

SKIRMISHING.

The sun was high in the heavens before the boys awoke. Both Grandpa and Grandma were well satisfied to let them sleep, for they could not tell what to look for when the boys and dog would appear upon the scene of action. About nine o'clock George rolled over to find it so late; he called to William and soon all were ready for downstairs.

Before going down, however, they heard some small kittens mewling and of course they had to be looked up. Nothing had been seen of Puss and Tom and the three half-grown kittens after the skirmish the day before. Turning the button to a small door leading to the attic, a whole lot of curious things presented themselves, and among others three small kittens about three weeks old.

Puss had a way in and out. One end of the grape arbor was attached to the house, upon which Puss would climb and crawl through a broken window pane in the back window of the attic. Here Puss had her second crop of kittens hid away safe as she supposed. The boys were careful not to allow Sonny to get in for they did not want any disturbance—at least not before they had their breakfast. They came out and closed the door cautiously, fully determined to spend the forenoon in there.

All three went down stairs. A breakfast of bread and milk toned up the boys and they told their Grandma that they were going to play in the attic the rest of the forenoon. The boys and Sonny retraced their steps to the attic, but the door was hooked inside and Sonny had to content himself with lying in wait just outside in the room where he and the boys had slept the night before.

William began to amuse himself with the kittens, but George was more interested in the collection of curiosities which he found there.



The Boys Plan a Campaign.

The Chaperings were descendants from the American Revolutionists, and Grandpa was very much concerned about lineage and archives, and annually there was displayed at the County Fair the collection with which George and William were now surrounded.

Every article was tabulated and had a history. Here was a spinning wheel brought from England by remote ancestors; an hour glass, about which George had read, but never had seen, was an object of no little interest as he saw the grains of sand mark the moments as they passed; an old Flint Lock gun, used before percussion caps were ever invented; a saber used in the American Revolution at the siege of Yorktown; a musket used in the war of the Rebellion; a collection of old time cannon balls and bullets; a knapsack and a long blue coat that had shielded Grandpa in the war of the Rebellion, and the blanket under which he had slept on southern fields. Next George came across the family tree and interested himself in

tracing his lineage to Revolutionary times and swelled up considerably to find himself eligible to membership in the "Sons of the Revolution." He was already a "Son of a Veteran," but now proposed to get lined up with an organization which, in his estimation, would carry with it considerable distinction.

All the while that George was interesting himself in this direction, William was busy with the kittens. Fearing that Sonny might possibly get to them, he thought, to shield them from harm, that by hiding them in some tin cans which Grandma had stored away for fall canning the kittens would be protected from any disturbance of Sonny. The lids were then fitted on.

The dinner bell rang and the boys rushed down stairs to be at the barn when the horses came in to ride them to water. That was the last time the kittens were thought of.

Grandma, wondering what kept the boys so quiet, went upstairs to investigate. She missed the kittens,

but supposed that after the boys left, Puss had carried them off to other quarters. This was in hay harvest. Grandma exhumed the kittens in September when making preparations to can tomatoes.

The boys hurried to the barn to water the horses. Sonny was very much in evidence but Grandpa was determined not to have a repetition of the previous day's experience with Sonny and the colt, so he locked Sonny in the oats bin, which of course put him on the safe side.

At dinner Grandma told the boys that she wanted them to go to the village on an errand for her. Accordingly they made themselves ready and dressed in their Sunday best, with a market basket on their arm and Sonny very much in evidence, they started off.

Two strange boys with a new dog in town soon attracted the attention of the youngsters of the village who proceeded to run a game of bluff and "start something."

George and William did not know just how to

size up the situation, but managed to escape without any trouble. Sonny, however, had a tussle or two with some canines, very much to the dislike of George and William. They started for Grandma's and discussed the situation all the way home, planning to "clean up" on the whole bunch.

When they got home they related their experience to Grandma, who told them that those were bad boys and to have nothing to do with them. The boys had not much to say but they were thinking all the while, fully determined in their own minds to at least break even on the game and punish the dogs that had insulted Sonny.

The remainder of the day was uneventful for either boys or dog. They went to the hill side where they gathered mountain tea leaves and box berries until the bell rang for supper.

After supper all went out for the chores. The oats bin proving so successful a place for concealing Sonny at noon, Grandpa decided to put him in here

to prevent any such catastrophe as happened the night before. When they were ready for the house Sonny was released from the prison and with the boys he was soon upstairs ready for bed.

*“Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FURY OF BATTLE

That night George and William lay in bed and discussed a way to get even with the town gang until Grandma called from down stairs to the boys to go to sleep.

The next morning Grandma asked the boys what they were going to do. They replied that they were going to see their two cousins who lived only a short distance away.

Grandma assented to this little dreaming that there was mischief brewing. The boys told their Grandma that Sonny would be left in the oats bin for they did not want their Uncle's dog to hurt him.

George and William started for their Uncle's house. After a visit of an hour or so the four boys started out and called Grant, the dog. Grant was a

large white and tan bull dog—the terror of the neighborhood. As they sauntered down the lane George and William began relating their experience in the village the day before.

Louis and Sanford, the two cousins, at once broke in and Louis proceeded to go over troubles that they had had with the same fellows.

“Yes, we know just who those boys are. There are three of them. They continually pick on us when we go up town and they need a good sound thrashing.”

“Well, we can give it to them,” said George, and he clinched his fist and drew up his forearm, displaying his muscle. “Just look at that! Have I been working all last winter in the Y. M. C. A. gymnasium for nothing?”

“Well, don’t be too sure about that,” answered Sanford, “That bunch is a pretty tough article to handle. They are always fighting and carrying on every chance they get and they put up a pretty good scrap.”

“Don’t make any difference,” answered George, “I can handle any one of the three.”

“Well, you may get some of the conceit taken out of you too, before you get through with the deal,” replied Sanford.

“You’er a coward, San.”

“No, I ain’t either.”

“Yes you are, or you wouldn’t be talking that way.”

“Well, I am right here for my end of it if you want to tackle it.”

“Yes, but where are you going to do it?” asked William. “If we go up town and have any trouble some more of those town fellows may jump in and we will have our wings clipped.”

“Cowardie! Cowardie!”

“No, I ain’t any coward either; I just—”

“Yes, he’s right, boys,” said Louis, “we’d better go slow for we don’t want to get the worst end of it.”

“Yes, and we want to get even with those dogs that jumped on Sonny,” said William.

“Well,” replied Louis, “we can do that. That is the easiest end of it. We can take Grant along and he can lick anything in Holmes County.”

By this time the boys were on their way in the direction of the village, hoping that some plan would suggest itself as they proceeded whereby they could heap sufficient punishment upon their offenders for all their flagrant wrongdoings in the past.

About a furlong from the village a huge rock lay at the road side with a tree shading it. Here the boys stopped and held a council of war.

“Gee! If we just had those fellows out here, wouldn’t we trim them?” said Louis.

“Well,” said William, “if you fellows’ll do the trimming I’ll get them out here all right.”

“But how will you do it?” asked Sanford.

“Easy enough. I know I can out run any of them. I will go up to the postoffice where they loaf and if they’re all there I will pick a scrap and then take a hike. If they take after me I’ll break for this

rock and I will go fast enough to take their wind. You three then can do the trimming to a queen's taste."

"Capital!" Shouted the other boys, "go ahead, and we'll be right here when you get back."

William was fleet of foot—he could run like a deer—and knew he was safe. He headed for the village and had no trouble finding the object of his search.

Seated on a bench in front of the postoffice the very three boys for whom he was looking were dangling their bare feet and evidently waiting for something to turn up. As William drew near all three left the bench and went to meet him and their leader exclaimed:

"Hello, you city guy! What are you doing here? Do you think you can come out here in the country and put it all over us? Not much!"

"Who's trying to put it all over you anyhow? I never did anything to you," answered William.

“No, nor you dassen’t either, or we’ll—”

“Oh you will, will you? Well, what’ll you do?”

“Well, we’ll show you what we’ll do and that mighty quick, too.”

“Yes, you’re a set of cowards, all of you. Three of you jumping on to one! I can lick the whole bunch, one at a time.”

“Ho, ho! He, he! Ho, ho! Listen to him talk! Say, you little banty, you need to be cured of your smartness.”

“Well, who’s going to do the curing?”

“We are.”

“When?”

“Right now.”

“Where?”

“Right here.”

William saw that it was beginning to look like business and he brought the argument to an abrupt close by slugging the ring leader a thump on the nose that brought the gore from it, and then took to his heels.

All three boys started after William and the race to the rock began.

It was a walk-away for William. He kept just far enough ahead to make himself safe and to keep the three after him. They turned the corner; the three boys behind the rock saw them coming and a couple of the dogs—the very ones that had jumped on Sonny—were barking at their side. William stubbed his toe and nearly fell, and before he could regain himself his pursuers were not more than three feet behind. William, however, gathered himself up and ran like a white head.

Behind the rock all three boys had their hats off, sleeves rolled up, and were holding onto Grant, who heard the barking of the dogs in the race and he wanted loose. The boys heard the patter of feet in the race and the wild threats of the three in pursuit.

William passed the rock twenty feet in the lead puffing like a good fellow but the other three never passed the rock. Louis, Sanford and George turned

Grant loose on the dogs and they cleaned up on the boys.

The boys from town saw the ambush they had run into. They were out of wind and the six boys were at once rolling and tumbling in the dusty road, with Louis, Sanford and George the major portion of the time on top, pounding their enemies for further orders.

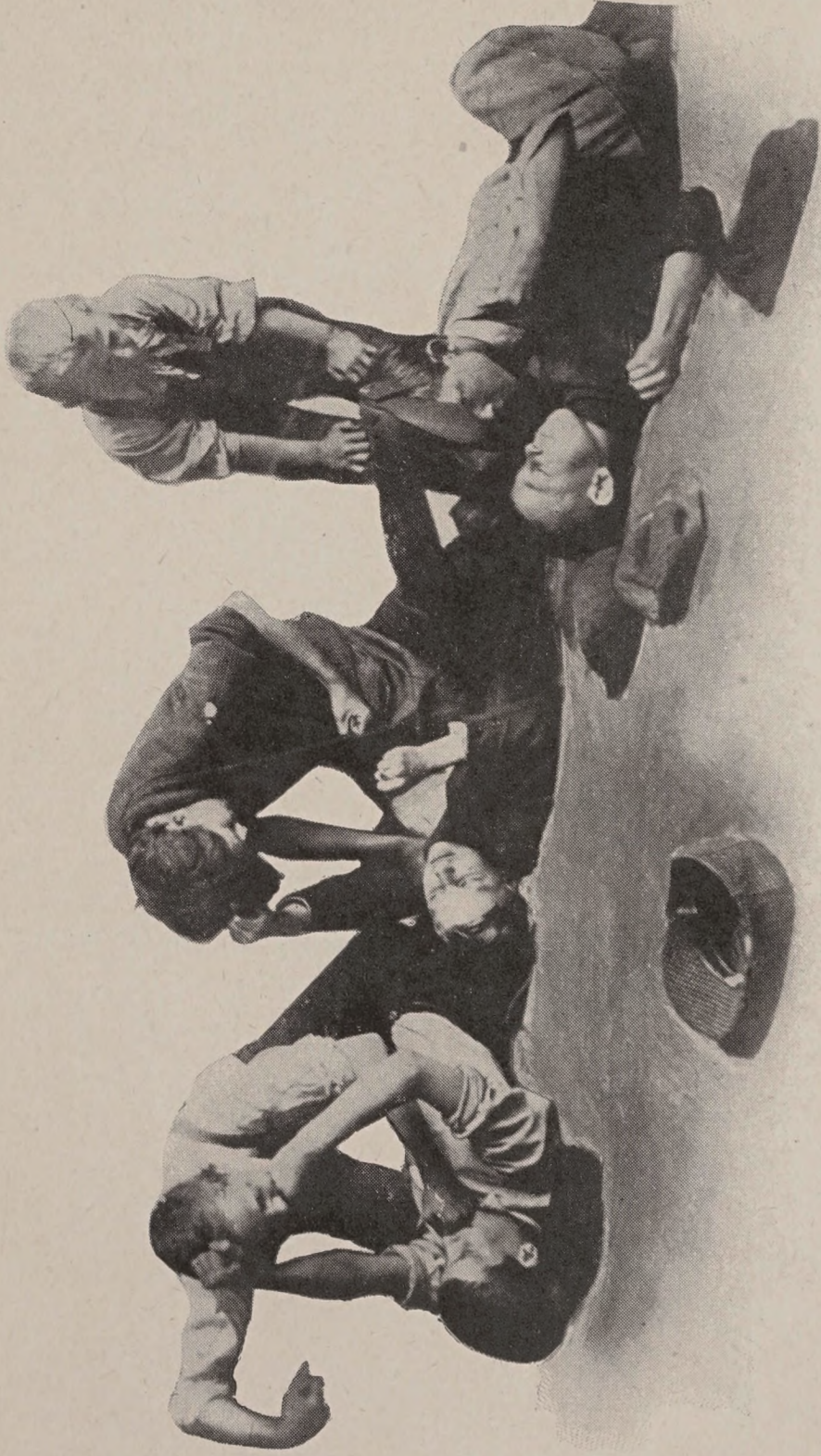
“Holler ’nuf!” shouted Louis.

“Never.”

“Oh, you won’t, won’t you? Well, we’ll show you a thing or two. When you have all you want, holler.”

The town bunch, however, were up against it. Blows from Louis, George and Sanford were falling thick and fast.

William was not so much interested in looking after the trimming which the boys were giving the villagers as he was in watching the dog fight. Grant had nearly put one of the dogs out of commission and William was pulling him off to turn loose on the other.



“Holler nuf!”

He proceeded to go after him and presently the piteous howlings from the second unfortunate dog which Grant was punishing attracted William and he pulled him off and the two whipped canines went limping up the road.

“Holler ’nuf,” shouted William, as he turned to the young riot in the road, “or I’ll take a hand in it too. We’ll show you fellows a thing or two. Give it to them, boys!”

The village youngsters could stand their punishment no longer and one after the other took water and yelled, “Nuf!”

If three youngsters ever had the wind taken out of their sails, those three did that forenoon. Before they were permitted to return to the village, they had to promise to be good and never thereafter molest any of the boys when they went to the village.

The two pair of cousins retraced their steps to Grandma’s all puffed up over their victory, each telling the other how it was done. They turned in at the

gate just as the bell rang for dinner, busily chatting over the adventure of the forenoon.

Grandma overheard the conversation, got interested at once and asked all about the affair.

Grandma was mortified over it and at once set about to philosophize with the boys about the awfulness of getting mixed up in trouble with such boys. In the midst of the curtain lecture which she was giving them, Grandpa and the hand came in for dinner and thought from the expression on their faces that there was a funeral on hand and asked at once:

“Boys, what has happened?”

“Nothing much,” answered William, “we just went up the road and cleaned up on that town bunch.”

“Well, boys,” continued Grandpa, “if you did a good job, we’ll all go up town tonight and have some ice cream on the strength of it.”

“You can get your change ready grandpa, for they got all they had coming and then some. We certainly trimmed them right” said William.

The boys were expecting Grandpa to side in with them but were not a little surprised to have him propose the ice cream over it, for the nickels and dimes usually came from Grandma; but to find Grandpa so generous got the boys guessing.

*“O life! how pleasant is thy morning,
Young fancy’s rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing caution’s lesson scorning!
We frisk away!”*

—BURNS.

CHAPTER NINE

THE VICTORS' PROCESSIONAL

The boys were betwixt and between over the situation at their grandparents. But as dinner progressed the boys turned the tide in their favor with humor and Grandpa finally suggested that they celebrate their victory in some manner befitting the occasion.

The boys were pretty much of the same opinion but were somewhat at a loss to frame up anything that appealed to them. But they finally decided to take Grant back home and liberate Sonny.

Twenty minutes later the door to Sonny's prison swung open and he joined the boys. All four boys and the dog sauntered back toward the village. On the outskirts there was an abandoned old red mill. As the boys approached they discovered five village

cows lying in the shade of the mill contentedly chewing their cud.

“I have it,” cried George. “The Victors’ Processional. There are the steeds awaiting their riders. Pick your charger and at count three we’ll all mount and see what will happen.”

No sooner suggested than each boy picked his charger. They knew that as soon as they landed astride the cows would probably get up but they forgot that Sonny was to figure in the deal. At count “three” each of the four boys made his mount and the cows at once got upon their feet. Sonny gave a yelp and the cows with their riders started for the village. Sonny was in the rear helping on the race.

“What will we do?” interrogated William.

“Stay with it,” shouted George, “we might as well start a Wild West show as not.”

Sonny was soon getting all the speed out of the cows that they could possibly produce, barking and nipping their heels. The boys were so busy holding

on that they did not realize that they were entering the town. Up the street they tore. They saw the situation but they were afraid to jump off, lest the owners of the bovines would give them what they had given the three boys in the forenoon.

“Stay on,” shouted Louis, and he began to shout at his cow.

The other boys joined him with a series of yells that would put to shame a whole tribe of Comanches. Sonny was still barking and the cows began to get desperate and bellow. As the Wild West show passed, the inhabitants came pouring out of the front doors like hornets out of a nest which had been struck with a stone.

At the edge of the village the road turned at a sharp angle and in a moment the procession was out of sight, heading for the watering place for the cows half a mile distant.

Talk about starting something! Men, women and children gathered in a bunch at the post office to canvass the situation.

Mary Jones was in the midst making the air blue because one of the boys was on her cow.

"I'll have the whole lot of them arrested," she shouted.

"That's me too," said Rebecca Ainsworth and she stamped her foot in the dust until she raised a cloud that fairly choked every one.

Two other women who owned cows in the herd were as emphatic in their expressions of vengeance as the two quoted, and their sympathizers were wagging their tongues and shaking their heads and raising the dust generally.

Squire Hopkins was sitting in a chair leaning back against the postoffice whittling. The squire was of a peculiar make-up mentally and physically. One pant leg was rolled up half way to the knee; the suspenders attached to his overalls were secured by nails instead of buttons; his blouse shirt with collar attached was open three or four buttons down. His hat was tilted to the back of his head. He was very much on the

bow-legged order, so much so that one might be justified in concluding that his trousers had to be cut out with a circular saw. Nevertheless, he was the court of last appeal in the community. He had seen the whole performance and had not yet gotten the wrinkles out of his face from laughing when he was surrounded by the mob and Mary was the spokeswoman.

“Squire, we want them there fellers arrested.”

“What’s the cause of complaint?” asked the squire.

This stumped the bunch.

“Well, we don’t know, but we want them arrested.”

“Well,” said the Squire, “I’ll tell ye the way I look at it. Them ’er fellers are old Jack Chapering’s grandchildren and they came up here for a vacation and are just out for a lettle fun, and if ye’s have them errested, the old man will come up here and have ye’s all fined for havin’ your cows on the highway. Do you see?”

The Squire had had too much fun out of the affair himself to court any trouble and his disposition in the matter was final. They began to disperse and the disturbance was quelled.

The boys kept on riding. Half a mile up the road Louis yelled, "Jump off!" Four boys landed in the road, each taking a tumble, mopping up enough dust with their clothes to start a real estate office.

Four youngsters grinned at each other as they gathered themselves together. They were nonplussed. They knew it would never do to go back through town, so they climbed over into the fields and got home by a circuitous route giving the villagers the slip. Louis and Sanford stopped at home for supper, caring nothing about Grandpa's treat, for all the ice cream in the country could not have persuaded the boys to go to the village until the excitement had fully subsided. Grandpa forgot all about the ice cream and George and William were far from saying anything about it.

The two boys were not very jubilant over the situation for they were fearing an insurrection from the villagers who might put them in bad favor at Grandma's. But a good night's sleep revived their spirits and they were ready for a new deal.

*“Whiskered cats aointed flee—
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations.”*

—BROWNING.

CHAPTER TEN

A BLACK CAT TRAVESTY

“Rose Ann, where are those ‘tarnel boys? Here it is half past nine o’clock and not a horse hooked to the hay wagon. I can’t find enough harness in the stable to get the horses hooked up and I’ll bet my last dollar that they have taken my trace chains and lines to make a swing of. And that dog of theirs! If I don’t poison him, it will be because I ain’t got the price of the button. There won’t be a living thing left on the place if he stays here. And I want to tell you, too, that Squire Hopkins just left the barn a little while ago and was telling me about some of their foolishness up town yesterday, and if it ain’t stopped there’s going to be trouble. He said that Mary Jones and Rebecca Ainsworth and Sadie Mills and Matilda Scharwemski were all coming to see you and

just tell you what kind of pranks these boys are up to. I tell you, Rose Ann, it's dreadful the way they're carryin' on."

While Grandpa was giving out his pent up feelings, Grandma was standing under the shade of the locust tree in the front yard with arms akimbo, listening to him. Grandpa turned about to go, but Grandma set in to reply:

"Now, Jack, look here. Don't let me hear of you getting any pisen for that dog. You know that those boys are shut up in town week in and week out and all their pranks won't amount to anything. If you would give them enough money for a swing rope, they wouldn't have to get your harness to use for that. I suppose that they are across the creek having a good time. I'll go down to town this afternoon and get them a rope if it takes the last crock of butter in the cellar to get it. And as far as those old women that are coming to see me goes, I'll take care of them. We all belong to the same sewing circle and there won't be

anything doing when I get through with them. I'll go and get your lines for you, and the boys and me will get along all right. They ain't to blame, Jack. There's no use talking, boys are boys and that's all that you can make out of them, and you might as well make up your mind to let them have a good time."

"Well, I guess they are havin' it all right," answered Grandpa, who began to change his attitude over the situation. "Get your sun bonnet, Rose Ann, and let's go and get things gathered up for I must get started to the hay field. If things keep going like they have yesterday and today, I won't get done harvesting this summer."

"Never mind the sun bonnet; we'll go just as I am."

Grandma untied her apron string and converted the apron into a bonnet by tying the hem about her head and tying it in a knot under her chin, leaving the strings to the breeze.

They started down the lane, across the creek and

sure enough, hanging from the spreading branches of the large elm was the missing harness, but not a boy in sight. They had left just after breakfast and while the morning work was being cared for the boys got the lines and started off.

Grandpa tried to get the lines by climbing the tree. Grandma was filling the space between his feet and the ground with a rail, but when the rail proved not long enough to aid him in gaining the first limb, he was unable to go farther and he clung to the tree with his arms and legs like an opossum to a rail.

“Watch out, Grandpa, you might fall,” piped a small voice from the bushes where the boys had hid when they saw who was coming.

“Wait a minute, I’ll get them down for you.”

The boys saw that it was safe, for by the time Grandpa and Grandma got to the swing, the atmosphere over their troubles had cleared up and their characteristic good humor prevailed.

Grandpa began to slide down the tree, but as he

slid the rough bark kept catching shirt and overalls and when he reached the ground his clothes were riddled completely.

“There you are, Rose Ann! Ain’t that a sad plight to be put into all for just a little fun?”

“Never mind, Jack, your other suit is clean and all mended up and it won’t take but a short time to change when we get to the house and I will mend these all right.”

George came bounding out of the bushes and started up the straps hand over hand until he reached the limb.

“Rose Ann, just look at that! Beats all how active those little fellows are. He goes up those lines like a squirrel up a tree,” said Grandpa.

Grandma was shading her eyes with her hands as she watched the performance, and she called out to “be careful” for she was afraid he might fall.

“Now, Jack, how’s the boy going to get down when he unties those straps?”

“Never mind anything about that. I’ll bet he is equal to the situation.”

William was standing directly under George. George loosened the ends and shouted to William.

“I’m ready.”

“Slide, Kelly, slide,” answered William.

George swung around under the limb hanging to one end of the strap while William, holding the other end, let him down safe.

“Does beat all what they can think of, don’t it, Jack?”

“That’s what, Rose Ann,” and Grandpa finished coiling the lines and the four and Sonny started for headquarters.

Grandpa told the boys to be sure and be on hand after dinner for they expected to finish cutting the hay that afternoon and he wanted to see Sonny catch the rabbit. That appealed to the boys.

The remainder of the forenoon the boys amused themselves about the barn. William proposed that they fish for chickens.

George got a darning needle and strung a couple grains of corn on a string and attached the string to the end of a fish pole. Sure enough Mr. Rooster came strutting about in a little bit and seeing the corn chuckled and called his mates, one of which grabbed and swallowed the corn. Sure enough they had a hen on the end of a line. Sonny, of course, had to jump at it and when the hen began to flop, Sonny made for her and before the boys could get him away he had broken her wing.

Grandma heard the flutter and squall and was on the scene in a jiffy. But she made the best of it, headed for the woodpile and the boys had chicken for dinner.

Just as the boys mounted the hay wagon for the harvest field, who should turn in at the gate but the four women callers for Grandma. Each wore a sun bonnet and their faces were red as beets from the heat of noon. The boys guessed what was doing but were not much concerned over the outcome, for they considered Grandma equal to any emergency.

About three o'clock, as the mowing machine turned the corner of the small patch of timothy still remaining uncut, sure enough, out popped Mr. Rabbit. For once in his life Sonny was in the right place. After it he took barking like a good fellow. The race headed for the apple orchard the boys bringing up the rear yelling at Sonny.

The dog, however, got some of the conceit taken out of him, for he wasn't one-two-three in the race. The rabbit dodged through a crack in the rail fence and Sonny jumped over, only to find the rabbit out of sight and safe from all harm. The boys came up and went to the tree of harvest sweets and filled their pockets.

George was attracted by a large black cat running along the fence and he called for Sonny to see him put it up a tree. Both boys ran to overtake the cat until Sonny could be summoned. George ran ahead and stopped the cat in a corner of the worm fence, and William stopped its retreat by standing at the opposite end of the worm in the fence.

Sonny was on hand. The cat could not get away and Sonny grabbed it and began shaking it with all his might. But he soon let it go. It proved to be a black skunk. The odor immediately became so strong that both boys turned in flight but it was too late. The clothing of both boys was saturated. But poor Sonny! He was so overcome that it made him sick. He rolled and tumbled and rooted his nose through the grass, but all in vain.

The boys started for the house. As they pushed along, half doubtful as to the outcome of their reception, George asked William:

“I wonder what Aunt Lucy would say if Sonny were to jump into her lap now?”

“I don’t know,” replied William, “but how’s this for changing his ’vironment?”

“This is a plenty.”

Sonny overtook them as they came to the gate. The boys had forgotten about Grandma’s callers but they heard them discussing the cow ride and George said to William;

“Gee! If Sonny gets in there it will break up that party all right.”

The boys took a run as if going in. Sonny headed the procession and with a bound he was in the midst.

“Mighty sakes alive!” shouted Matilda, and she grabbed her nose and bonnet and started for the door.

The other three women jumped and coughed and choked and ran to the porch for fresh air and the house was cleared. Grandma went in the other direction to the side door. Sonny gave a bark over the situation and all four callers thought the dog was after them. Down the steps they ran with sun bonnets waving and apron strings dangling and petticoats flapping, for the strides the women were taking clearly demonstrated the fact that they could have used a yard or two more in the bottom of their skirts at this particular time to an advantage.

When they reached the middle of the road, they turned about and Matilda called to Grandma:

“Well, Rose Ann, you sure have your troubles.”

"Never mind," she answered, "the boys and me will get along all right. Come back again and see me."

"Yes, we will. You come and see us too. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

The four callers started up the road all carrying sufficient evidence of their call to serve as a gentle reminder for several days to come.

Grandma told the boys to go in swimming with their clothes on and to take Sonny along and she would bring them some clean clothes to put on when they came out.

The boys took a good soak and got Sonny and scrubbed him completely. Grandma, in the meantime, was airing the house and preparing supper in the outkitchen.

Grandpa saw the skunk deal from the hay field. When he came into the house the atmosphere was a gentle reminder of the affair and he asked:

“Rose Ann, have you gone into the fur business?”

“Now, Jack, this is no laughing matter. It’s dreadful! But the boys didn’t know any better and they are not to blame for it.

“There you go again! Always taking their part regardless of what happens. I suppose that if they would break up every settin’ hen on the place it would be all right with you.”

Just then the boys came around the corner of the house looking like drowned rats. Grandma had forgotten all about their dry clothes. Grandpa, not knowing about the bath, stared in blank amazement as they waddled up and he exclaimed:

“Well, Rose Ann, just look at that!”

“Well, bless my stars! You poor boys! Grandma forgot all about you. Wait until I get your dry clothes.”

She returned in a few moments with the dry clothes and the boys went to the back porch and changed.

When everything was squared away and they were eating supper, William was sitting next to Grandpa, and he said:

“Grandpa, you ought to have been here this afternoon.”

“Why, William?”

“We had a rough house.”

“How so?”

“Well, when we came in from the orchard, Grandma had four callers and Sonny came running in and they fell all over themselves trying to get away.”

“Yes, Jack,” said Grandma, “that’s right. I couldn’t help laughing over it to see them going out, and they never stopped until they were in the middle of the road.”

“Well,” continued Grandpa, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody good, and if Sonny had not cleared the house we would probably have had company for supper. At any rate, I have always heard that the smell is healthy and keeps away disease.”

“Well, Grandpa, I can believe that all right,” said George, “for I don’t blame a microbe for backing out when he strikes skunk.”

*“Still, when she slept, he kept both
watch and ward.”*

—SPENCER.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

A WATCHFUL WAITING

That night when the boys were ready for bed they missed Sonny. The boys called and whistled and searched the premises over but no Sonny. They gave up the search at ten o'clock and a pair of heavy hearted youngsters dragged their way upstairs that night for bed. But Grandma poured oil on the waters by telling them that dogs liked to hunt at night and that he would be home by morning. This helped out a little but they heard the clock strike ten, eleven and twelve before they went to sleep.

The next morning both boys were out as soon as Grandma was for they made her promise the night before that she would call them as soon as she got up.

They at once instituted a search. The bell rang for breakfast, but no Sonny. But both boys were so

worked up that they could not eat and William asked Grandma for a lunch to take along for he said they would not be back until they found him.

They went to their Uncle's, to the orchard, the hay field, back to the barn, up to the village, but all in vain. Sonny could not be found. When they came back to Grandma's William was crying as if he had lost the best friend on earth. When they came in the gate Grandma said:

"Boys, I heard a dog howling down across the railroad awhile ago. Perhaps a train has hurt him. You had better go down and see if it is Sonny or some other dog."

This was the only clue that had been presented. It was only a straw for William said through his tears:

"No use talking about that, Grandma, for Sonny is accustomed to trains at home and knows enough to keep out of their way."

However, George was more hopeful and started

down the lane in the direction of the railroad. Notwithstanding William's doubtings, he followed along behind, calling to George to "wait."

As they drew near the railroad their pace quickened. They dashed up grade to see if Sonny was in sight. Sure enough, a hundred yards away Sonny was curled up on the bank of the creek by the side of the swimming pool. The boys were wild with delight and rushed to where he lay. There was a happy reunion. William hugged and kissed him and there was genuine rejoicing.

The day before when they were taking their bath, William washed out his handkerchief and spread it out to dry. When he started for Grandma's he forgot it and Sonny had returned and slept by it all night.

That gave a new thought to the boys. Sonny would make a watch dog. As they returned to Grandma's, speculations were rife between the boys as to the possibilities in this direction.

Despite the disturbance Sonny had occasioned,

Grandma and Grandpa were both glad to see him found. They were half mistrusting that some one from the village had poisoned him but the whole situation was now changed. The boys and Sonny punished an inordinate dinner. They went along to the barn but both boys were tired out and they and the dog took a good sleep on the new hay.

When they awoke the boys went fishing. The fishing was fine but the catching was not so good. When the supper bell rang they started for the house and nothing of importance happened until bedtime when Sonny was missing again.

“Now William,” said George, “you have left something again and I suppose he is watching it.”

William protested and said that he had not; but both boys were satisfied that they would find him again in the morning. Sure enough, the next day, as the second search was instituted, they found Sonny watching a willow fishing pole which George had discarded and thrown over the lane fence on his trip home from fishing.

“That settles it,” said George, “Sonny is a watch dog. We will take my coat to the gate in the hay field and leave it there at the side and see if he will allow anything to come near.”

The boys at once proceeded to try out the new game. George laid his coat in the shadow of the large gate post and got Sonny to lie down on it. Presently Grandma's geese came wandering along and headed for the open gate. Sonny bounded out at them and put the whole flock to flight. This tickled the boys and even brought the Yankee smile to Grandpa's face. Many a time thereafter Sonny was left in charge of the open gate never permitting anything to pass without the consent of some one.

That week harvest was ended and Saturday was appointed for Grandpa and Grandma to go to the county seat for trading. George and William were to stay at home and take care of things while they were gone.

“When the cat’s away, the mice will play.”

CHAPTER TWELVE.

A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

Early in the morning Dick was hooked up to the spring wagon and Grandma and Grandpa loaded up their butter and eggs, a crate of chickens and other marketable products and were soon ready for their journey.

Grandpa was dressed in his Sunday-go-to-meeting best—a long black Prince Albert coat over a pair of tight fitting black pantaloons, that fitted snug over the calfskin boots shined for the occasion. A high standing white collar and black cravat and a silk hat that had seen quite as many summers as old Gin. The occasion had to be an extraordinary one for Grandpa to appear in this garb but for several weeks he had been hard at it, early and late, and he wanted a day off. Then, too, the next day was

quarterly meeting at the church and he wanted to get his political bearings for the fall campaign while in the county seat to be used the next day.

Grandma was as unlike him in make-up as day and night. He was about six feet two inches and with his stovepipe hat he was a towering spectacle to say the least. Grandma was descendant from the Pennsylvania Quakers, rather short of stature, of a stout build, with a ruddy complexion. She wore a black cashmere dress and white apron and a small black bonnet drawn close to her head with large black ribbons. She carried on one arm a market basket of unusual proportions, and with the other hand she held the large family umbrella to shield them from the blazing sun.

Dick was untied. Grandma mounted the seat from the one side of the wagon and Grandpa from the other. Grandma told the boys to watch that Sonny did not get into mischief and she would bring them something from town upon their return.

The boys were determined in themselves that nothing should happen that would give either Grandma or Grandpa a chance for regret over the trust reposed in them. They were at once the sole proprietors of the plantation. They were confident Grandma would not forget them and they were successful in their determination that nothing should happen—not a thing did happen the whole day long that could disturb either Grandpa or Grandma but the boys had their fun just the same.

Scarcely had the grandparents turned the bend in the road and were out of sight until George proposed something useful. Grandpa had a three-year-old colt which had never been taught to lead. All the devices known to the horsemen in the entire community had been tried. He had been coaxed, whipped and hauled, but lead he would not. He was a fine specimen of horse, a bright red bay with black points, a small head, lean face, large, full eyes. Grandpa prided himself in the fact that he owned him. He

had offered \$5.00 repeatedly to anyone who would break him to lead but had never parted company with the cash.

George proposed to William that they break the colt to lead. This started quite an argument between the boys, George contending that he could break him if William would help a little. William finally consented.

The boys started for the pasture field where old Gin, the colt, and the three-year-old were grazing. They were careful, however, to shut Sonny in the oats bin before they started out lest he should put the whole bunch to the bad.

William and George both had several nubbins of corn and went to old Gin. She was very easily caught and bridled, and the boys led her into the stable, the two colts following along behind. Once in, the door was hooked. Old Gin was harnessed and bridled and the three-year-old haltered with a heavy rope halter and secured so that it could not be slipped

over his head. The boys then got about fifty feet of inch rope and attached to the end of the halter. Gin was taken out and the three-year-old followed but the young colt was locked in the stable. Gin was hooked to a singletree and the other end of the fifty feet of rope to this. William mounted old Gin with a good rawhide. Sonny was liberated from the oats bin and the performance was ready to begin.

William was to ride ahead and George was to try to lead the colt only a few feet in advance.

Gin started off. When the slack was well taken, George started to lead the colt, but, of course, the colt went back on the halter. Gin had all the slack by this time and the tug of war began.

George held on to the rope to give the colt the impression that he was doing the pulling. Gin had struck a snag for the colt did not go. George yelled to William:

“Put on the gad. Give her all you have. Don’t let her fly back and have the laugh on us instead of the colt.”

William did his best. He began scoring poor old Gin until he brought a welt every time but it put her down to business and she pulled every pound in her.

The colt began to slip along, and George, only about eight feet in advance of the colt, yelled to William:

“Keep her going. The colt is coming.”

But the colt, as he saw he was being dragged along, even at a snail's pace, began to rear and plunge, run sidewise, and George got a little farther away to make himself safe from his plunging. The colt threw himself flat on his side in the road. George called to William:

“Put on the gad.”

“Then he got Sonny in the deal by sicking him on the colt. This was just what the dog wanted—in on the deal.

When the colt threw himself, Gin, being so far from the load, could not drag the dead weight of the

colt through the dust only at the slowest pace. But Sonny piled in with a savage bark and growl and grabbed the colt by the tail and began shaking as he did the skunk a few days previous. This was a new chapter in the history of the colt. William was plying the rawhide and yelling at Gin. George was yelling at the colt and Sonny was growling and shaking at the colt's tail.

The circus lasted only a moment. The colt was on his feet. He shook his head, threw it into the air, and Sonny let go. The colt started to lead after George as if it had been broken all its life. He led it up to and away from old Gin, and finally he untied the halter from the rope and led him any place he chose. Gin and the colt were put in the stable.

William and George were all puffed up over what they had accomplished and started for their Uncle's, with whom it had been arranged by Grandma that they should take dinner in her absence. The two cousins had been waiting for the boys and asked them

when they arrived what had been keeping them. Whereupon, they related their experience with the colt.

“Well,” replied the two cousins, “we might as well finish breaking him after dinner. That colt won’t stand tied. He will pull at everything he is tied to and he needs that taken out of him.”

Accordingly, after dinner the four boys went to the stable and got the colt. Sure enough, he had not forgotten his lesson in leading and he marched off after the boys as quietly as a lamb.

“Now tie him to the post and see what he will do,” said Louis to George.

The colt went back on the halter attached to the post but he did not break the post or pull it, but he manifested a disposition to break up everything about him.

“We must take that out of him,” said Louis.

Louis then proposed a ducking for the colt.

William got the post digger, Louis and George

hunted for a solid post, and Sanford led the colt. All headed for the old swimming pool. Here the boys dug a deep hole and set the post just about the length of the colt from the edge of the creek. The bank was about five feet high and the water about ten feet deep. When the post was tamped firm the colt was brought to the post and turned with his tail to the creek. Louis got his knife ready and when George secured the knot which fastened the colt, George started as if walking away.

Back went the colt on the halter.

“Look at him, boys,” shouted Louis.

The colt was pulling and tugging on the halter with his heels only a foot away from the bank of the creek. Louis cut the rope with his knife and the colt turned a complete backward somersault and landed head first in the water.

Talk about a splash! It seemed as if the whole hillside was caving in and was changing the channel of the creek.

The boys stayed upon the bank to see the outcome of the affair. The colt righted himself, turned about and swam to shore where George awaited him. George proposed that they try him again. They did so but all the pull was taken out of Mr. Colt. They took him back to the barn and tied him to the post at the front gate again but he was completely licked. There was no more pulling on the halter for him.

“It’s all wrong, Mell, it’s all wrong!

The card’s in the bottom of the deck.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

THE RETURN.

George and William were looking for Grandma and Grandpa about five o'clock. After putting the colt back in the stable they went to the house to start the fire in the cook stove so that getting supper might be facilitated to that extent. Louis and Sanford decided that they would stay for supper. The boys got busy, cut the ham, pared the potatoes, apples for sauce, and had supper well under way before the grandparents appeared.

Presently a whoop from Grandpa at the front gate told the story of their return. All four boys ran at the signal, for Grandma never returned from the county seat without something all around for the grandchildren. Each of the boys grabbed an armful of packages and started for the house. Grandma

and Grandpa brought up the rear with what the boys could not take.

The untying of the packages began. William found a pair of suspenders marked for him; Louis came across a cap for himself; George ran on to a pair of new trousers; Sanford found a pair of stockings. Then there was cotton batting for some new comfortables for the winter, a new dress for Grandma, socks and underwear for Grandpa, a Barlow knife for George, a swing rope, a new collar for Sonny, a lot of seeds for Fall planting, a can of color varnish to fix up the furniture, for Aunt Roxie was to be married that fall and things about the house had to be slicked up some. Then the wedding trousseau had to be gone through. There were stockings—William was trying them on unnoticed by anyone. He pulled them clear up to his hips.

“Gee,” said William, “Aunt Rox must have pretty big legs to take such stockings as these.”

“Well, what do you know about that?” interrogated George, and he saw a chance for some fun.

Aunt Rox had not been at home during the first part of the visit but had come home with Grandma and Grandpa that evening. She had been piling her belongings on a chair by themselves. The other three boys made a run for her chair. Louis got the new night gown and got into it; Sanford got a new white petticoat and bedecked himself in this, while George grabbed the new corset and hooked it on and the four boys gave a parade about the house at Aunt Roxie's expense.

Aunt Roxie was furious. This, however, only tickled the boys. Grandpa laughed and told Roxie that she might as well smile and look sweet over it.

"Yes," said Grandma, "boys are boys, Roxie, and that is all you can make out of them."

"Yes," said Grandpa, "and you'll find out after you're home for awhile that they ain't to blame for anything that goes wrong, no matter what happens."

The boys joined hands and formed a circle about Aunt Roxie and began singing a parody on "Oh, My Darling," improvising as they went along:

“Oh, darling Roxie, darling Roxie,
Oh, my darling Roxie Ann,
How we love you, no one can tell you,
For we love you all we can.”

Aunt Roxie did smile and look sweet, as Grandpa suggested, which soon restored matters to their normal state of affairs.

Grandma and Roxie then began picking up the paper and putting away the family belongings, while Grandpa and the boys went to the barn to water the horses and get things squared away for the chores after supper.

The boys had forgotten to turn old Gin and the colts back to pasture, so Grandpa said that they would take all four to water. George got a halter and began to put it on the three-year-old when Grandpa turned about and said:

“George, now you can’t lead that colt anywhere. All the horsemen in this county have tried to break him to lead and they can’t do it. You might just as well take that halter off of him,”



Darling Roxie

“Well, Grandpa,” replied George, “there are one or two things you don’t know. One is, that colt will lead and the second is that he will stand tied.”

“All right,” answered Grandpa, “go ahead and we will see who is right.”

George had the halter on and swung open the stable door and led the colt up and down the road, while Grandpa stood gazing at the exhibition never saying a word. Then George tied him to the post in front of the house and went back to the barn where Grandpa was still standing like a statue calmly looking on.

“How’s that, Grandpa? There’s two things that you learned today.”

“Well, boys, I guess you’re right.”

Grandpa dropped Dick’s strap and went to the house and called out:

“Rose Ann! Come out here and look at this three-year-old. Those boys have broken him to lead and to stand tied while we were gone today, and how they

did it, I don't know. But there he stands tied this very minute and he never offers to pull at all. They led him back and forth, up and down the road, like I would lead old Gin. Beat's me, sure as the world."

"Well, now Jackson, I have been telling you that there was something in those boys if you would just give them a chance. When you went away they had an opportunity to do something and they did it. Now, Jack, hurry on to do the watering, for supper will be ready shortly and I have a great many things to do."

Grandpa untied the colt and started up the lane to the spring to water. George and William were on hand with Dick and old Gin, while Sonny and the colt sauntered along behind.

The spring was only a short walk from the house. It was of unusual proportions and walled in with stone. It was about four feet deep and as many in diameter. Grandpa had not waited to change his garb but still wore his long Prince Albert and high stovepipe hat.

While the horses stopped at the trough for their drink, Grandpa stepped around to the spring for a drink for himself. The dipper was gone, so he tilted his hat to the back of his head and got down on his hands and knees to drink. Sonny was scampering about and, seeing Grandpa stooped over, thought that he meant to play leapfrog. He took a run and a jump and landed upon Grandpa. Not being prepared for this, Grandpa went head first into the spring with a splash, plug hat, long coat and all. Before he could gather himself up he was soaked to the skin. The splash in the spring and subsequent kicking about to get out, frightened the horses and they wheeled about and started down the lane in the direction of the stable not stopping until every horse was in his stall.

The boys roared as they viewed the performance, and George called out:

“Grandpa, I thought you Presbyterians didn’t believe in immersion.”

“Well, boys,” replied Grandpa, “it don’t make

any difference whether a fellow believes in a thing or not when he gets it pushed onto him like I did that immersion that I just got through with. But that dog of yours ought to be thrashed completely and if I could get hold of him there wouldn't be enough left of him to tell the story."

"Yes, but Grandpa," said George, as he began to make excuses for Sonny, "you must remember that he was taught to play leapfrog, and when he saw you leaning over he thought you were in for the game and he jumped on."

"Yes, I should say he did jump on," continued Grandpa. "He struck me so hard he nearly unjointed my neck. But I suppose that I will have to put up with it and, as I said to Roxie, smile and look sweet."

"Well, Grandpa, the dog was not to blame, for—"

"Well, of all things good and glorious, Jack Chapering!" exclaimed Grandma. "What in the world has happened to you?"

The boys and Grandpa had just rounded the

corner of the house as Grandma broke in upon George's defense of Sonny.

Grandpa was a sight. The water was still trickling down his long hair and his coat was dripping like the ribs of an umbrella in a rain storm. His fine boots were full of water and every step was accompanied with a swish as his foot struck the ground. His plug hat he carried in his hand, which he used to help out in his gesticulations.

"Well, Rose Ann, things have gone just about far enough with that fool dog. He's to blame for the whole affair. I was down on all fours getting a drink at the spring and that dog jumped right square on the top of me and into the spring I went, head first. Here it is quarterly meeting tomorrow, too, and I must get up there to get hold of the squire and a few others to get our fall politics started in the right direction. Ain't things in a pretty mess?"

"Well, Jack Chapering, I should say things are in a pretty mess," replied Grandma, "but it's no use to

worry over what's been but just steer clear of trouble in the future. The next time you stoop over for a drink and the dog is around, have some one stand guard over you until you are through."

"Now, Rose Ann, don't go poking fun at me over it for this is no fun. I feel like going out and tying a stone around that 'tarnal dog's neck and throwing him into the spring."

"Now, Jack, there ain't no use getting mad over it, for the dog nor the boys either were to blame for—"

"Now, just listen to that again, 'neither the boys or dog to blame!' Rose Ann, you ought to write a book on logic for you certainly are good at reasoning. But it doesn't make any difference who was to blame, that ain't clearing up the situation. This is the only Sunday suit I have and there's no use talking, I must be at the quarterly meetin' tomorrow."

"Jack, you're making a whole lot of fuss about nothing. I can have everything dry and pressed in shape by morning if you will just do what evening chores I have to do."

“It won’t take long to do that for the boys can go along and help,” replied Grandpa.

All the while the argument was going on, Grandpa was pulling off his boots and wet clothes while Grandma was hanging them around the stove to dry. Aunt Rox, in the meantime, had supper on the table and when Grandpa put on dry clothes every person lined up for a square meal.

After supper Grandpa inquired of Grandma what there was for him to do.

“Well, Jack, there ain’t much. Milk my two cows. Be sure, too, to give the spotted cow some bran for if you don’t she won’t let her milk down and the way butter is going up I want every drop of milk I can get. Then feed the pigs and then get the calf’s milk ready. Be sure that the milk ain’t turned the least bit sour, and if it is, just put in a pinch of sody and get it warmed up a little. Then go and see that the hens and their chickens are in their proper coops for if they get in the wrong places there is

always fighting and then the little chickens are trampled to death. Then shut the door to the coops and be sure that you shut them tight or the rats will get in and there won't be a chicken left alive on the place. Go through the hen house and get what setting hens are on the nests and shut them up in the cooler; you might just as well get the water carried and put in the pans for the little chickens and that much work will be done for morning. By that time I will have the churning ready. Saturday night ain't a very good night for churning but this warm weather the cream gets sour so quick and by Monday it would be so old the butter would be taken for limburger cheese. The milk crocks must be filled with cold water before the milk is put into them and the skimming taken care of. While you are churning, the boys can wash the dishes and milk crocks and shine the stove, for we will likely have company home with us from quarterly meetin' and that stove is looking just dreadful. Then get the feed in for the chickens in the morning; fill the wood box; and, Jack, it will

be a good plan to fill the copper kettle with soft water for there won't be any time for that kind of thing tomorrow with so much going on, and Roxie has brought so much home for the wash Monday that it will be a big one. Cut the kindling for the stove in the morning and for wash day and see that you have plenty of it. Kill those two hens I have shut up, pick and dress them, for I must get them on the stove in the morning and have them stewed tender before we start to church. Take a basket with you when you turn the cows out to pasture and bring back some apples from the orchard for sauce tomorrow. While you are turning out the cows, the boys can get the new potatoes dug and pick the peas for tomorrow's dinner and some new beets would be nice pickled, and we will have some hard-boiled eggs with them; and pull some radishes and onions for breakfast and get them into a crock of cold spring water. Then put the salt fish to soak for breakfast. By that time I will have our pies baked and Roxie

will be through with the cake and you can come in and help press your suit for it takes two to do it well. When you get through with that you can—”

“Confound that blasted dog, anyway!” shouted Grandpa.

“Why, what’s the matter with the dog now, Jack?” asked Grandma. “Just never mind him but get things started, for you know how things are here on Sunday morning when we have quarterly meetin’.”

“Grandpa, how often does quarterly meeting come and what time do you get to bed the night before?” asked William.

“Well, William, we don’t have any set time to go to bed, but it is not as bad as the getting up. We usually meet ourselves getting up just as we are going to bed,” answered Grandpa.

“How’s that, Grandpa,” asked William, “who did you say you met?”

“Now, Jack, you must get started so you can get back to the house and help me here,” continued Grandma.

*“Who mix’d reason with pleasure,
and wisdom with mirth?”*

—GOLDSMITH.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

A SUNDAY MORNING.

Sunday morning broke without a cloud in the sky. However, long before the break of day Grandma had the household up and preparations for the day began. George and William were drowsy from being awakened so early, and even Sonny was short on sleep and he was soon napping again. The boys were shining their shoes and dusting their clothes and brushing their caps and getting everything in readiness for jumping into on short notice. So much had been said about quarterly meeting that they were counting on a big day.

“Grandma, what will we do with Sonny while we are gone?” asked William. “It will never do to let him go to church for he would be sure to get into mischief, and anyway, church is no place for dogs.”

“Well,” replied Grandma, “we can shut him up in the oats bin and he will be all right there until we get back.”

“Yes, but Grandma, he will get awful lonesome there all by himself,” answered William.

“No, Sonny will be all right. Dogs like to sleep on Sundays, anyway.”

That was a new one on William, and he replied:

“Well, maybe they do, but that puts me in mind of hearing that fish won’t bite on Sunday, but they do, ’cause George and I have tried that and they bite just as well on Sunday as any other day.”

“Well, we will only be gone a short time and he will get along.”

“How long does quarterly meeting last?” asked William.

“Well, there’s the Sunday school at 10 o’clock and preaching at 11, and the preacher never preaches over an hour, and counting in the singing and praying and experience meeting, we ought to be out by 2 o’clock.”

“Gee, is that all quarterly meeting is? I thought we were going to have some fun but there won’t be anything to it if that’s all. I guess I will stay home with Sonny.”

“Ah no, William, that would be very wrong. We must all go to church to learn how to be good.”

“Well, Grandma, learning how to be good and being good are two different things. I think I would better stay with Sonny.”

Grandma did not press the matter farther at this point but rather suspected that at the last shuffle, when every person was busy getting ready, that he would get busy and be on hand with the rest of them.

Grandpa had the lantern lighted and he and the boys went to the barn to get the work done up so they could get an early start to church. Dick was given a good cleaning and harnessed; the back seat was put on the spring wagon and the work shuffled along in pretty good shape. The bell rang and all were on hand for breakfast.

After breakfast Grandma sprung a new one on the boys and Grandpa. Notwithstanding the fact that it was Sunday and quarterly meeting and all that, the large leather chair had to be mended, for she was looking for a caller or two and the best chair in the house must be in shape for the occasion.

Accordingly, Grandpa got his repair kit and he and the two boys began the job of repairing the upholstered chair. The boys and grandpa were down on their knees and were pulling and tugging at the leather to get it in place while Grandpa was tacking it with the large brass-headed tacks. Once William let the leather slip before Grandpa struck the tack and the hammer landed on Grandpa's thumb. Grandpa never said a word but he gave William a very significant little spank. William did not say anything about the spank but decided to square that account in another way.

After about ten minutes, William's knees began to hurt and he looked over at George, who had laid

his head down upon the bottom of the chair with his face turned toward William, and was making himself as comfortable as he could. Two pair of twinkling eyes met. Sonny was curled up under the stove asleep. William gave George the wink, and when George saw that the end was drawing nigh, he punched Sonny with his foot. Sonny woke up, saw Grandpa leaning over near him and he lit on top of him again for another leapfrog. Grandpa had about half straightened up as Sonny struck him but he had not yet released his grip on the back of the chair. Of course, least expecting such a thing at such a time as this, he was thrown out of balance and with a thump his head struck the back of the chair and he went scrambling over and finally measured his length on the floor. His spectacles flew off; the chair went in one direction, the repair kit in another. Every person was on hands in a minute as a result of the commotion. Grandpa gathered himself up and asked:

“Now, then, Rose Ann, who’s to blame for all

this turmoil? I do declare things are growing worse and worse, and I don't know what I'll do if they continue."

"Never mind, Jack," replied Grandma, "the boys wasn't to blame, nor the dog either. You had no one standing guard, as I told you to do yesterday."

"Well," said Grandpa, "if that wouldn't get your goat, then I don't know what would."

"Never mind, pa," said Aunt Roxie, "you must smile and look sweet." And she paid back in his own coin.

"Well, it does beat all what will happen when you are not looking for it," said Grandpa, as he started for the door.

"Now, Jack," replied Grandma, "hurry things along so we can get started early for I want to visit awhile with everybody before church begins."

"Yes, and I want to see my political friends before church too," answered Grandpa, "for there is plenty doing along this line this fall,"

At 9 o'clock Dick was hooked to the spring wagon and was standing at the front gate. Everybody was dressed in their Sunday best. The Prince Albert suit was pressed, the silk hat shined up, and the crease in the pantaloons over Grandpa's pipestem legs set him off in a-number-one shape.

Grandpa and the two boys were in the front seat and Grandma and Aunt Roxie, with the family umbrella shielding their complexions from the blazing sun, were in the back seat; but Sonny was a prisoner in the oats bin barking his head off wanting to go along.

"Roxie, I rather suspect Duley will be at church, don't you think so?" asked Grandpa.

"Oh, I rather look for him," she replied.

"Grandpa, who is Duley?" asked William.

"Well, he's a fine young man who will likely be your uncle some day," replied Grandpa.

"Will he go home with us to dinner?" continued William.

“Oh, I suspect so. He usually stays all day when he comes.”

“And all night too?” asked William.

“Well, a good portion of it.”

“Will he be there tonight?”

“Well, I suppose so.”

William gave George a nudge and winked at him.

This brought a chuckle out of Grandma for she had a guess coming that there would be something doing with the boys when Duley would appear.

“Well, boys, if there’s any smartness going on tonight, I will even up with you—see if I don’t,” Aunt Roxie blurted out.

“Who said a word about any smartness,” asked George, as he turned about with a face of innocence personified and looked straight at Aunt Roxie.

“Well, never you mind. I saw William nudge and wink and I just won’t put up with any of your nonsense.”

“Don’t kick before you’re spurred,” answered

William. "Don't you know that my left eye has a twitch once in awhile? And as for me nudging George, I did do that, but he was squeezing me up so close to Grandpa that I wanted him to sit over and give me more room. If anything happens you needn't blame us nor Sonny either."

"Well," said Grandpa, "it might be a pretty good plan to have someone stand guard for you, Roxie, and then you will be safe."

"I'll be the guard when it comes to that, and I'll see that Sonny behaves." George was the spokesman and he gave William a wink.

"Sonny will be all right if you just let him alone," replied Aunt Roxie. "Mind what I tell you, there will be plenty doing if he and you boys don't behave."

A long row of carriages, spring wagons and horses lined up to the hitching racks, met their view as they turned the bend in the road which brought them in sight of the church. A fair sized congregation of all

ages was in front exchanging greetings, and getting the news circulated about from all quarters of the community—and there was a plenty to circulate.

“Now, Jack, didn’t I tell you to hurry this morning? I just knew we would be late. Seems to me we never get anywhere on time.” Grandma was in a hurry to get to visiting and she took this opportunity to get Grandpa to hurry along.

In front of the church the chief topic of conversation was the events of the boys at the Chapering’s during the past week. Mary Jones was about the first to appear and the terrible things which the boys had done were related to those who were not acquainted with their doings, dwelling upon the trials of Mrs. Chapering with a sympathizing strain, adding the suggestion that they must cheer up when she came. Mary, shading her eyes with her palm leaf fan as she looked in the direction from which they were to come, exclaimed:

“Well, bless my soul! There they are this minute

and both the boys are along. Dear me! Dear me! If something terrible don't happen in church today it won't be because they are not here. It would be just terrible on her to have some dreadful thing happen—but maybe it won't! Maybe it won't!"

A circle of women began to move to the road side to welcome the Chaperings and to lighten Grandma's burdens.

*“Two lads that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day tomorrow as today,
And to be boy eternal.”*

—SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

QUARTERLY MEETING.

Grandpa was getting some speed out of Dick as he came up the last flat leading to the church. He was sitting straight as an arrow. The two boys were sizing up the situation, guessing about what quarterly meeting was like. When they came to the gate, fully a dozen women were waiting there to receive them. Grandma could hardly get room to get out of the wagon as they gathered around and Mary exclaimed:

“Well, Rose Ann, we’re just so glad to see you we don’t know what to do; and here is Roxie too. Well, bless my soul, how fine she looks. Just about eighteen this fall too! But, I say, Rose Ann, they tell me you are about to lose her. Dear girl that she is! Really, I just pretty near cried my eyes out last night thinkin’ about you and your troubles, and how

soon you would lose Roxie, and dear, oh dear, what a world this is!”

Grandma had been embraced and kissed by Mary as she kept pouring forth her exclamations and lamentations and passed on to the next for a similar ordeal. Grandma was passing down the line; Roxie was next, and following her was William.

Mary continued: “Well, well, here is William. Darling little angel that he is. Mary must have a kiss from him, too, and—”

“Oh, no not me!” said William. “If you start off your quarterly meeting by getting the kissing bug buzzing, you can count me out. Come on, George, we’ll go with Grandpa.”

George was pretty much of the same mind as William, so they went with Grandpa who was hitching the horse to the rack. Grandpa was pretty well surrounded by the political leaders of the community, all eager to get the lay of the ground at the county seat.

Grandpa at once got busy and began to outline the campaign to the politicians of the village. This, however, had very little interest in it for the boys and they sauntered off by themselves. They were conscious of the fact, from the general complexion of affairs, that their pranks during the week were being reviewed by the assembled inhabitants and they were not altogether satisfied with the situation.

“I wonder if those old women will get through looking at us pretty soon. ‘Darling little angel!’ Wouldn’t that chill you? I’ll bet that when those four old women get into the church and things begin to warm up that there will be plenty of skunk in the atmosphere, for they have the very same dresses on that they had when they were down to Grandma’s and when Sonny jumped in he rubbed right against Mary. When she wanted to kiss me she smelled like a fur market. ‘Darling little angel!’ George, if I’m an angel, what are you?” asked William.

“Well, I don’t know,” replied George, “but, Wil-

liam, we want to lay low today. Of course, Sonny isn't here to get us into trouble but every person will be watching us and I think we had better make a home run on our good behavior."

"Well, it won't last very long," said William, "and I suppose we can stand it."

The second bell rang for Sunday school and Grandpa called to the boys to run along to Grandma and go to Sunday school.

George and William elbowed through the crowd and found Grandma and Aunt Roxie talking to a handsome young fellow and they half guessed who he was.

"Here, George and William, here is Mr. Humingbee. I want you to meet him for he is going home to dinner with us today," said Grandma, as she presented them to him.

The boys were natty looking fellows and their hats came off as they shook hands. Every eye in the church yard was on the boys, for their appearance

at this time was a sharp contrast to the garb they had appeared in during the week. William had become accustomed to talking rather loud to Grandpa, owing to his defective hearing, and the unusual circumstances at this time had the nerves of both boys at a little above normal tension. William with a smile, said: "I'll bet this is Duley," in rather a boisterous tone. A smile stole over the faces of the spectators and they eagerly anticipated some developments.

"Yes," replied Mr. Humingbee, "that's what they call me."

"Well, say," continued William, "to look at you, one wouldn't think that you had such an awful appetite, but you must have, for Grandma cooked two whole chickens before we started for church, and when you aren't coming there we never have but one and that lasts two meals. Gee! you don't look like you could eat a whole chicken yourself."

This brought a perceptible giggle from some of the lassies and the sweat began to trickle down Duley's

face; Aunt Roxie was biting her lips in rage and trying to catch William's eye to shut him up—at least while there were so many about taking in the situation.

“And, say!” continued William, “Grandpa says you're going to be our uncle pretty soon. Gee! that will be fine; and last night I heard Aunt Roxie talking about something and I suppose it must have been about gettin' married, for she said she could hardly wait.”

Palm leaf fans began to go up to hide the smiles that were going the rounds. Grandma turned sideways with William's hand in hers to break off the conversation. Duley felt his collar wilting and the sweat running down his neck. He thought to turn the conversation and said:

“Roxie, this is certainly a warm day.”

“Well,” said William, “it will be hotter than this before the day is over for it isn't noon yet.”

Grandma had been making her way to the church door with William following close to her heels. Aunt

Roxie and Duley took a stroll until Sunday school would be over but the boys and Grandma went into the church.

After the formal opening exercises were closed, the classes were assembled and George and William were placed in a class of boys about their size. It was the average Sunday school class—they were there because they had to be and not because they wanted to be, and they were not much concerned about the lesson. Two of the boys were fussing over their marbles; two others had a jack knife trade on and others were concerned along similar lines. George and William knew none of the boys and consequently they were not mixed in on any of the deals.

The teacher finally succeeded in securing sufficient attention to enable her to begin the lesson. It was the story of the Prodigal Son. She gave the story in a very graphic manner, going somewhat into detail in describing the home he had left, his kind hearted mother, his father, the crops they raised, the servants

he had, his beautiful clothes, the music and comforts of the old home.

As the story developed, one boy after another began to get interested.

The teacher told of the wanderings of the prodigal, the fast life he had led, the bad company he kept, and his subsequent distress and want. She spoke of feeding the swine and the hunger from which he was suffering; she then portrayed the plenty at the table of his father, and finally put the question as the climax to the class.

“If you were away from home with no employment but the feeding of hogs, and you were suffering from hunger and your father had such great abundance, what would you do?”

No one knew.

Finally William's hand went up. George was pulling and tugging at it to get it down but the teacher saw the hand and she asked:

“William, what would you do?”

“Why, that’s easy,” replied William, “I would have killed a pig.”

This reply was so unexpected that the teacher chuckled over it and the boys in the class, embracing the opportunity, began to laugh and applaud. As a result the class at once became the center of attraction, as such a demonstration in the village church was quite out of the ordinary.

The sudden turn of things was somewhat embarrassing to William for he had answered the question in good faith. George, in an undertone, told William to keep quiet, for he was fearing an uprising of the preacher or his officials which might result in receiving an invitation for he and William to retire.

Sunday school was over and the congregation began to assemble for preaching services. Grandpa came in. He found Grandma and the boys and the family pew was soon occupied. Grandpa allowed Grandma to enter the seat first, then George was next, Grandpa followed George, and William was

last of all. Grandpa was determined to keep a look out for any disturbance by sitting between the boys.

The church pews were constructed by the carpenters and were about as uncomfortable as a store box set against a wall. The front of the seat was boarded to the floor, allowing no room for the feet to be drawn back occasionally for a shift of position. This afforded an excellent place for restless youngsters to pound their heels against during the long services, and furnished employment for mothers in keeping down the disturbance resulting from the drumming. Grandpa's pew had a wooden stool about eighteen inches long, used as a foot rest. George and Grandma were enjoying this.

The sermon was the usual quarterly effort—long, prosy and methodical. William soon grew restless and found himself kicking against the seat. Grandpa silenced this from time to time and George frequently reached across Grandpa and stopped the drumming. After about half an hour Grandma got to napping,

and Grandpa's head began to drop over on his chest. He was soon dead to the world and was dreaming of his political conquests in the campaign. George grew restless and had a hard time keeping awake, but he was determined that nothing should happen to disturb the meeting and would not allow himself to fall asleep.

William leaned over Grandpa's lap and whispered to George and asked him for his knife. George pulled his knife out of his pocket and gave it to him, thinking it would keep him quiet during the remainder of the sermon. It had the desired effect. William at once began to cut his Sunday school paper and that of George's into strips about a quarter of an inch wide; he then cut these crosswise into small bits. He was making confetti, and putting it on the seat beside him. He chanced also to have in his inside coat pocket a good supply left over from the Fourth of July celebration. He added this to what he had manufactured from the Sunday school papers. The Sun-

day school papers were finally dissected and George wanted his knife. William was not ready to part with the knife and he put it into his pocket. George gave up the knife question at this time, and William fell to filling Grandpa's stovepipe hat with confetti and then pouring it back upon the seat. This amused him for some considerable time.

Grandpa went on in his dreams and the preacher kept on preaching. George grew impatient about the knife and told William that he wanted it. William set the hat half full of confetti on the end of the seat while he took up the argument with George. George was not in for an argument—he wanted the knife and he thought he must have it. William pushed away as far as he could. George leaned over Grandpa's lap and grabbed for him. Just then a safety pin in George's shirtwaist band gave way and imbedded itself in Grandpa's leg.

Grandpa jumped; his heels struck the front of the seat with a bang that fairly splintered it. George

jumped back, kicking over the foot rest, which, of course, aroused Grandma and her feet struck the floor. Simultaneously, with all the commotion, Grandpa started from his dreams and called out: "Rose Ann!"

"Sh—sh—sh" answered Grandma.

Grandpa saw that he had made a monkey of himself as he saw the astonished members of the congregation rubbing the sleep out of their own eyes and centering their gaze upon the Chapering pew. But the preacher kept on preaching, passing the event unnoticed.

The end came finally and the audience began to gather about the front of the edifice for their farewells.

Grandpa, being one of the officers of the church, was one of the last to get out. Leaving the door, Grandma called out to him to "hurry on." Grandpa, absorbed in the surroundings and paying no attention to anyone but the boys, put his hat on, dumping the

confetti all over himself and bringing a roar from everyone in the church yard.

Grandma capped the climax by saying to him:

“Well, Jack, you have certainly covered yourself with glory today.”

“Never mind the glory part of it,” replied Grandpa, “we must get started home.”

*“I’m quite ashamed—’tis mighty rude
To eat so much—but all’s so good!
I have a thousand thanks to give,
My lord alone knows how to live.”*

—POPE.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

THE COST OF HIGH LIVING.

When they started home, George noticed that Aunt Roxie was gone and he asked Grandpa:

“Where is Aunt Roxie?”

“Oh, she went in Duley’s buggy with him a little while ago. They are probably home by this time. Aunt Rox will get dinner started by the time we get home.”

A look of disappointment stole over the boys’ faces at being given the slip by Aunt Rox. George, half impatiently, said to William:

“I don’t think it was very smart in her to run off and leave us. But, never mind, if we don’t even up with her before the day is over it will be because we can’t get our cocoanuts to evolve something interesting for her.”

“Well, boys,” replied Grandma, “Aunt Rox didn’t run off and leave you; she just hurried on ahead to get dinner started for she knew you would be nearly starved, and Duley was there with his horse and buggy and she just jumped in with him and hurried on.”

“Well,” said William, “she won’t always be in such a hurry to get off with him, ’cause Mama says that this thing of getting married isn’t what it’s cracked up to be.”

“Well, never mind, now,” said George, “the next thing you know you will run this conversation into politics and politics isn’t the thing to talk on Sunday.”

“Who said anything about politics?” asked William. “I was just telling Grandma what Mama said about getting married.”

“Well, that was only a joke.”

“No joke about it. Guess I can tell when she gets off a joke, for she always laughs at it, and when she said that getting married wasn’t what it was cracked up to be she didn’t even smile.”

“Well, it makes no difference in this case. Aunt Rox ran off and left us and we must even up.”

Only a short drive of ten minutes brought them to the front gate where Duley was waiting to help Grandma out. The boys went along to the barn to help put up the horse and liberate Sonny. When they opened the door to the oats bin, Sonny came out with a bound and made his usual demonstration in welcoming the return of the boys.

The boys began at once to relate the good qualities of Sonny to Duley. However, Duley was not a friend to dogs. He was afraid of the smallest cur that ran the streets, but Sonny's unusual demonstrations of docility rather attracted him and he became interested, if for no other reason than to please the boys.

“Just wait until after dinner,” said William, “and we will show you what he can do. He's a circus dog, a watch dog and a—”

“Rogue,” said Grandpa, with a wink of his Yankee eye at Duley.

William had not been permitted to finish his discription as Grandpa had put on the finishing touch.

“Well,” asked William of Grandpa, “What’s a rogue?”

“Oh, don’t you know what a rogue is, William?” asked George.

“No, and neither do you.”

“Well, I do too.”

“Well, you don’t.”

“I do, too.”

“Well, then, George, what is a rogue?”

George began to scratch his head and asked:

“What’s the use of asking such foolish questions?”

“There, I knew you didn’t know anything about it.”

William addressed the original question again to Grandpa.

“Well,” replied Grandpa, “just wait until we get things set around out here and we will go into the house and see if we can find out what a rogue is.”

A tap of the dinner bell sent a welcome invitation to two hungry boys and they went to the house where dinner was formally announced. Grandpa was seated at the end of the table, of course, and took charge of serving the chicken dinner. Grandma sat at the other end, presiding over the coffee and desert. Duley and Aunt Rox were on one side of the table, and directly across were William and George, and Sonny wagging his tail at their side.

The guest of the house was, of course, served first.

"That's all right Grandpa," as George thought to set the ball to rolling, "let Duley get started first for he has a whole chicken to eat for dinner."

"And say, Duley," continued William, "if you get stuck on the job, just call Sonny and he will help you out."

"Boys," said Aunt Roxie, "I am certainly astonished at the liberty you are taking in addressing Mr. Humingbee as Duley. Were your mother here, I am sure that things would be different."

“Well,” replied George, “what she don’t know won’t hurt her.”

Sonny kept going the rounds, trotting out to the porch where he chewed the joints off of the bones as they were given him by various members of the family.

“Sonny must have a good dinner,” said William, “for we will have a circus afterwards.”

Sonny had given no exhibitions of his clever tricks since he had been at Grandma’s and the boys had decided that they would pull off some of his stunts.

Dinner over, the Chaperings gathered under the shade of the locust tree to see the show. Grandpa and Duley lighted their cigars. Grandma and Roxie were enjoying their rockers and the show began.

Sonny did all he knew. He played leap frog with the boys, ran a race, ran after his tail, played “dead dog,” jumped through a hoop, rolled over, and did numberless other antics. The most amusing was the “catch your tail,” running about in a circle, barking and growling, then turning about and running in the



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other direction to unwind himself. The louder the applause and laughter, the faster he would go and the louder he would bark.

At the end of each performance Sonny was given a treat. Duley had brought a box of chocolates with him and Sonny fared exceptionally well. He soon discovered who had them—Roxie, of course—and at the end of each performance he would trot over to her and with a bark would indicate that he was ready for his treat.

After the show was over, Grandma and Roxie began clearing the dishes and preparing the evening lunch. Grandpa and Duley sauntered about the premises, taking a look at the belongings of the homestead. George and William were staying close to the house watching what was going on there. What chicken was left was stripped off the bones and chicken salad prepared; a plate of ham sandwiches was prepared; some cream whipped; a pot of tea made and lowered into the well by means of a rope to be cold for supper.

The boys noticed that a couple of plates were being prepared and carried to the cellar. They rather guessed that these were to be a second evening lunch for a couple—Duley and Aunt Roxie.

At five o'clock, lunch was served, after which Duley and Aunt Roxie went driving. Grandma and Grandpa were busy with the chores—the boys were busy too, but in another direction.

They went to the cellar and found the two serves for the later lunch for Duley and Roxie. They found Grandma's cayene pepper and spread this thick over the red lean of the ham in the sandwiches. The chicken salad was left undisturbed, for they were afraid the entire lunch would be shunned if it were all tampered with. The whipped cream was salted until bitter, and the top crust of the two pieces of apple pie were carefully raised and a spoonful of Grandma's soft soap was carefully spread over the apples and the crust then allowed to come again to its original position. The boys then got the mustard can and poured

some scalding water over it and made some mustard tea strong enough to take the lining from the stomach. The can of tea was raised from the well and practically all of it thrown out and the mustard tea placed in its stead.

The boys then went across the field to their Uncle's and visited until about nine o'clock. When they returned Grandma and Grandpa were in bed; Duley and Roxie were building air castles in the parlor. The boys came in and made things merry with Sonny for a little while and then went upstairs to bed—that is, they were supposed to be in bed.

They got into their night dresses and instead of going to bed, they lay down on the floor with their ears over a register leading to the parlor (simply a register through the floor, allowing the warm air from the parlor to go to the upstairs bedroom to take the chill off in the extreme winter weather). Here they lay waiting for developments. Sonny, however, was curled up on the floor asleep.

William grew tired of the planning of Duley and Aunt Roxie for the wedding and he soon fell asleep on the floor. George, however, was determined to hear the fun and waited patiently until ten o'clock, when Aunt Roxie announced that it was lunch time. George awakened William and the two pairs of ears were waiting over the register for developments.

Aunt Roxie prepared the parlor stand for the lunch. A hand drawn lunch cloth was the first article to appear in the preparation. Next came the two plates, each from the cellar, on which were two ham sandwiches and a serve of chicken salad, garnished with parsley; two others had on them the pieces of pie doped with whipped cream; a plate with several pieces of angel food cake was on one corner of the stand. A vase of lilies served as a centerpiece; a pitcher of sweet milk, and one of tea completed the array and lunch was ready.

“Looks good to me,” said Duley.

George gave William a nudge.

“Well, I hope it’s as good as it looks, for I have done my best on this and if you do not like this kind of cooking you had better take back the ring and break the engagement.”

William nudged George and giggled.

“William, shut up your noise or you will spoil the whole thing the first thing you know!” said George, half fearing that his chuckle had been heard by the couple below.

“Well,” continued Duley, “a person who can’t enjoy this couldn’t enjoy anything. You may keep the ring.”

Aunt Roxie was filling the glasses with milk and Duley took a few small bites about the edges of the sandwich and then took some of the chicken salad. By this time he had access to the center of the sandwich where a hot morsel awaited him. However, he had had already gotten a little of the pepper.

“Golly, Roxie, they certainly used plenty of pepper in curing that ham all right. Guess that what

William said about it being hotter before the day was over is right.”

He grabbed for the glass of milk and swallowed all but the glass, holding the milk in his mouth between swallows to cool his smarting tongue.

“Yes,” replied Roxie, “we always have trouble with Pa about the pepper. He usually puts in too much but he says it keeps the flies away.”

“Well, there’s no flies on that, I can promise you.”

Duley leaned back in his chair for a little chat.

“Well, Roxie, I am somewhat surprised that those boys have been so quiet today. (Duley helped himself with another glass of milk.) I was rather expecting some mischief before the day was over.”

“Well, I am sorry to see you disappointed, but I put it up to the boys to behave themselves or I would even up with them.” (Duley had another glass of milk.)

“Well, they certainly have behaved beautifully all day.”

“How’s that, William?” asked George.

Aunt Roxie had only been nibbling around the edges of her sandwich and had not struck the center where the pepper lay thick. Duley took another bite of sandwich out of the very heart and began to chew it. The pepper began to burn his mouth and he took a forkful of chicken salad too cool his tongue, but no avail. His mouth was on fire; his face flushed; the perspiration broke out over his forehead; the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He began to cough and choke with his mouth full. He could stand it no longer and he broke for the door where he unloaded his mouth of the hot morsel.

“What in the world is the matter?” asked Aunt Rox, as she followed him to the door. Her embarrassment knew no bounds—she was mortified. Duley saw that he was the victim of a joke at the hands of the boys.

“Say, Roxie, if you’re always going to make it this hot for me, I guess you had better give me my ring back, as you suggested.”

The boys heard it all and were convulsed. They were bursting to laugh out, but dared not. William couldn't refrain and he covered his mouth with both hands and giggled. This brought a giggle from George.

Duley and Aunt Roxie heard the laughter and guessed at once that there was a joke. As soon as Duley could get a breath, Aunt Roxie asked again:

“What in the world is wrong?”

“Just go in and taste your sandwich and you will see what is wrong.”

Aunt Roxie went back to the stand and took the top layer of bread off the sandwich, but the red pepper had melted into the red color of the ham and nothing was visible; she smelled it—nothing doing; she ran her tongue over the ham to taste it. Duley gave her elbow a push and about an inch and a half of Aunt Roxie's tongue lit in the center of the ham and pepper.

That settled it! She ran for the door, coughing and choking and gasping for breath.

“Bring me some milk, quick! I’m fainting.”

George and William were in bed with their heads covered in the pillows after this, rolling and kicking and laughing.

When Aunt Roxie gained her breath again, she and Duley agreed to say nothing more about it so the fun for the boys would be spoiled.

“Those devilish boys!” said Duley. “That’s a good one. I should say it has warmed up since morning.”

Aunt Roxie discarded the sandwiches, went to the cellar and returned with fresh bread and butter and made other sandwiches in their stead. These furnished relief and the chicken salad was finished.

George and William resumed their places on the floor by the register to hear the finish.

Angel food cake and milk was the next.

“The first course must have been Devil’s cake, wasn’t it, Roxie?”

“Well, if we are to judge by the temperature, I suppose it was,” she replied.

The delicious cake had a soothing effect upon the smarting tongues and mouths.

Duley then mustered fresh courage and began on the apple pie with the whipped cream dope.

“Roxie, you know that I am long on apple pie with whipped cream. Is this piece all you have?”

“Plenty more where this came from,” she replied.

Duley cut off the end of the pie and began chewing. He detected the cream bitter with salt but was determined to swallow it—and he did. (The last glass of milk followed.) He cut off a second bite and began chewing. The soft soap in the pie began to froth, and the salt in the cream began to irritate his mouth. He began to squirm and gag and a look of despair stole over him. He glared, he stared, and he grabbed for air—and he swallowed it.

Aunt Roxie was beside herself—horrified and mortified—and cried out:

“My goodness, Duley, what’s the matter now?”

“Oh my! Oh my! my stomach! I’m soft soaped for sure and salted down besides.”

Aunt Roxie in despair, grabbed the glass of supposed tea and said:

“Take this tea quick, it will make you feel better.”

He fairly snatched it from her and before he stopped to taste it, drained the glass to the bottom.

“Roxie! Roxie! Oh my! That isn’t tea at all! I’m poisoned! I’m dying! That’s something else. Oh my! My stomach! Help! Help me to the door.”

Aunt Roxie helped him to the door where Duley leaned over the banister of the porch and the stomach yielded up its contents.

This relieved the situation. When Duley revived sufficiently, he said:

“Those **DEVILISH BOYS!**”

George and William could hold in no longer. They roared.

Duley said to Aunt Roxie, “I’m going upstairs and get those fellows and you can hold them under the pump and I’ll give them a cool shower bath.”

The boys heard this and they piled into bed. The

stair door opened with a rattle that awakened Sonny. Duley rushed up the stairs, got one knee on the bed and Sonny landed on the tail of his cut-away coat. This scared Duley stiff and he started for the stairs. Sonny was growling and shaking the coat tail and Duley yelling for help. Duley missed his footing on the stair, and he, dog and all went tumbling down stairs and landed in a pile on the landing with his heels taking a final smash at the door.

This raised the whole household. Grandpa rolled over in bed and exclaimed:

“Rose Ann! Something has happened.”

Sonny went back up stairs carrying something in his mouth. Duley gathered himself up and went limping across the parlor. A crest began to puff up on his forehead; one leg and arm was hurt and the entire tail of his coat ripped off at the waist. Grandpa and Grandma came tearing out in their night gowns and George and William joined the party all eagerly trying to learn what happened.

Duley turned to Roxie and said:

“This has certainly been a warm day!”

“Well, of all things, Duley,” said Grandma, as she sized up the wreck. “It will never do for you to go home in this plight. I’ll fix you up first, and get you to bed and in the morning I’ll fix your coat.”

Grandma went to the cellar and got a couple of large potatoes. These she scraped and made into a poultice which she tied over the lump on his forehead. She then got the liniment for his arm and leg and a dose from her bitters bottle put him ready for bed.

The guest chamber was put in readiness and Duley turned loose to rest for the night. Order was finally restored and the household retired for the rest of the night.

*“In short to awake
The heroic of youth from the hades of joy,
And once more be, though but for an hour
Jack—a boy.”*

—OWEN MEREDITH.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

The next morning found things at the homestead in fairly good shape. Duley came out feeling remarkably well—all things considered. The potato poultice had taken the inflammation out of the bump on his forehead and was scarcely noticeable. The bitters had toned up his stomach and the liniment had taken the soreness out of his leg and arm. All in all, he was pretty much the Mr. Humingbee the boys had met the day before at the quarterly meeting—all but the coat.

While Aunt Roxie was preparing breakfast, Grandpa, the boys and Duley were about caring for the chores and Grandma was busy on the coat. When breakfast was called, Duley's coat looked as if it had just come from the tailor's shop. It was not until breakfast that Grandpa and Grandma learned of the cause of the uproar of the night before.

“Does beat all what boys will think of,” said Grandpa. “But I tell you, Duley, we have made it a rule around here to smile and look sweet at everything that happens. But the toughest proposition that we have to deal with around here is to find out who’s to blame for all that is happening.”

Grandma broke in at this point and Grandpa gave Duley the wink.

“Well, now, Jack, the boys are not to blame for what happened the lunch. We had no business to go away and leave the lunch where they could find it. And as far as the coat goes, Sonny was not to blame for he probably thought that he was doing his duty in watching and caring for the boys.”

“Duley, what do you think of that for an argument?” asked Grandpa, as the Yankee smile lighted up his face.

“Well,” replied Duley, “there seems to be good logic in her reasoning but it’s all a joke anyway, and a good one too, and I shall not forget soon what a warm day it was.”

“Boys,” continued Duley, “what are you planning for today?”

“Not much doing today,” answered George, with a suppressed smile. “We’re just going to visit the school with Louis and Sanford. School opens today and that won’t amount to much.”

“Well, we will be better able to tell what it amounts to this evening,” replied Grandpa. “But I tell you, boys, I wouldn’t get into mischief up there, for that old professor that they have hired for the upper room has a frightful record as a disciplinarian, and he was hired to clean things out up there. He gets hot at the slightest provocation.”

“Well, Grandpa,” answered George, “the only thing to do when a man gets hot is to cool him off.”

After breakfast George and William started for their two cousins, with whom they were to visit the school, and early as seven thirty o’clock the four boys were in the road for school. Louis was fifteen and had a pretty level head on him and he proceeded to give the other three some advice.

“Now, boys, it will never do for us to get into any kind of a mixup today. Those three fellows that we trimmed up a few days ago will be there. They always try out a new teacher and all that we will have to do is to lay low and watch for the fun. Just as sure as anything happens, they will be blamed for it, and we must not get mixed up with them, for as sure as we do we are into trouble.”

“That’s all right,” replied George, with a look of disgust, “but what are you going to do if they try to start something?”

“Well, George,” continued Louis, “just bear in mind what I tell you and don’t get mixed up in any trouble with them. They will not bother us any today for they will be more interested in the new professor than anyone else.”

The boys kept up a spirited argument until they came to the school house. This to George and William was an object of much interest. The well appointed, modern buildings, to which they were

accustomed in their city schools was a sharp contrast to the one in the village. This was a two story frame building; it had been painted — long ago; here and there was a split weatherboard and occasionally the lower half of the board gone entirely. The English sparrows had adorned the cornice with nests which, with strings and feathers fluttering to the breeze, did anything but enhance the beauty of the building. The door was double, one half of which was secured inside with a heavy nail; the lock had gone to hunt the missing weatherboards and had been replaced by an ordinary padlock, hasp and staple. Entering here, the wall was scrolled over with red and white crayon, pencil marks, bits of poetry, crude drawings, names, uncouth rhymes, and so forth, until scarcely enough room was left to inscribe the name of the new professor. The railing leading up the stair had fallen victim of the jack knife and was hand carved. The upper hall was but a repetition of the lower. Over the middle of the upper hall was a large opening fully

five feet square. The covering had long since given way to the pranks of the "big boys" and, accordingly, the belfry was in full view. Here hung a monstrous bell, the pride of the villagers. Originally it had been used on one of the large steam boats on the Mississippi river. One of the leading citizens of the village had secured it and had it placed in the school building. Every youngster knew the history of this bell and many had climbed to the beams on which it hung and covered the inside with inscriptions. There was a metal frame supporting it, which rested upon two massive beams extending across the belfry. Its peals had a touch of sadness in them to nearly every boy in the village.

The door leading to the upper room was entered and this presented a scene in keeping with those through which the boys had passed. A patch of plastering had fallen upon the professor's desk. The rain had run down the stove pipe and consequently a good coat of rust presented an attractive spectacle.

The stove door had a broken hinge and was held in place by the iron handled shovel being leaned against it. The lower part of the bowl was cracked half way around, nothing remained of the ash pan but the front. A few erasers, a couple empty crayon boxes, the wreck of a map of the world, and a battered globe constituted the equipment.

The seats were hand made and hand carved, made by the same village carpenters who had constructed the church pews, likewise the professor's desk and mission chair.

As George and William entered and took a perspective view they were not a little surprised at the surroundings. They witnessed several scuffles between the boys over choice of seats, and noticed that muscle was the last resort in selection—the stronger element securing the seats they desired. The choice of seats having been made, the play grounds was the next object of interest. This had grown wild with dog fennel, ragweed and cockle burr; but a ball diamond was soon mapped out and a game started.

At nine o'clock the bell tolled out the doleful tidings that operations in the sprouting room were ready to begin. Every youngster was in his seat ready for the opening exercises and nothing developed in the forenoon session out of the ordinary. Classes were selected by those present, and at ten o'clock school was dismissed to allow time during the noon recess to secure books and supplies.

The school house was cleared in a few minutes, each youngster carrying with him a slip of paper with such books and supplies listed on same as in the judgment of the pupils they needed most. The whole school at once proceeded to the store on the corner for their books and then went home to dinner.

George and William and the two cousins retraced their steps from the store to the school house on their trip home to dinner. They stopped at the school house to see the center of learning in its silent grandeur. Not a soul was near—not even the janitor, for this centered in the professor, and he had



“Come on, Professor, we’ll help you home.”

gone to dinner. The boys got their heads together and took desperate chance for some fun.

One proposed turning the bell up and balancing it in this position and then filling it with water. There was no time to be lost and at it they went. One climbed to the beams and balanced the bell, as the other three pulled it into position with the rope over the wheel. Eight or nine buckets of water were then drawn and emptied into the bell and the boys made their escape unobserved by anyone. The secret was all their own.

They rushed home for dinner and hurried back to watch for developments. Boys began to assemble and a game of cricket was started. The professor proposed to play strong with the school boys and he too joined the game. It had the desired effect. Five minutes before one o'clock, he called out:

“Come on, boys, it's time for school.”

The whole bunch followed at his heels and crowded up the stair. The professor was an inveterate smoker,

and in the excitement of the ball game he had forgotten to throw the stub of his cigar away. He ran upstairs and swung on the bell rope. The half barrel of water, added to the weight of the ponderous bell, made it slow to swing from its position. But it had started. The professor leaned back to look up to see what was wrong just as the deluge struck him. He was dazed. The girls screamed; the boys roared; the professor gurgled, he gasped, he glared, and in the midst of it all swallowed the stub of his cigar. He was drenched from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. He reeled and staggered and fanned the air frantically for breath; this came with a wheeze and gurgle, and he then grabbed his throat, then his stomach, for the cigar stub began at once to start trouble.

Some of the boys mustered courage and volunteered assistance. They stripped him of his coat and vest and hung them across a chair in the sun to dry and then helped him to his chair. Into this he sank limp

and pale for a rest, while the pupils went to their seats, stuffing handkerchiefs into their mouths to keep back the laughter. Instead of gaining his equilibrium, the cigar stub was getting in its work, and he grew steadily worse. He became deathly white; his eyes stared; he clasped his stomach, with the exclamation:

“Oh my! I’m so sick, I’m so sick! Boys, help me to the door where I may get some fresh air.”

The boys flocked to his assistance and helped him to the adjoining church yard. He was no better. He lay down under the shade of a large tree. He grew dizzy and soon the whole world was flying about him in a circle. He said he must go to his room. He tried to stand, but he only went sprawling and grabbed hold of the grass to keep from falling off.

“Oh, if I could only get relief! Death would be better than this. If I could only die!”

“Oh, no, professor,” said Sanford, “that wouldn’t do at all. You will be better by morning. You are just now going through what I experienced with my

first chew of tobacco which my father gave me. He told me to swallow the spit and I did. I can truly sympathize with you, but you will be better as soon as you part company with the cigar stub. Come on, Professor, we will help you home."

The two pairs of cousins and other boys helped him to his feet. He ordered school closed for the remainder of the day and with the aid of the boys made his way up the village street where the inhabitants came out as the professor went by. George carried his coat, William, his watch and vest, while Louis and Sanford braced him up as he went along. They took him to his room, called a physician, and then excused themselves.

The professor thanked the boys for their services and told George and William to come to school again for he was always glad to see such bright faces in school.

The boys left him alone in his glory and started down the street. They stopped at the post office for

the mail and Squire Hopkins asked about what had happened.

“Well,” replied Louis, “during the noon recess some of the boys tipped the bell bottom side up and filled it with water and when the professor tried to ring it the water very nearly drowned the old codger, and he swallowed the stub of his cigar which he had in his mouth, and it went back on him.”

“Well, if that isn’t the latest one,” said the Squire, with a shake of his head, “that is some more work of those boys that you fellows trimmed up the other day.”

“Boys, that was the best job you ever did, but if those fellows are not stopped, they will come to some bad end.”

The boys put the mail under their arms and started home. Near the rock where they had had their battle, a large black snake lay full length across the dusty road.

“Hold on now, boys,” said Louis, “here’s a chance for some more fun.”

George grabbed a stone, Sanford a stick, but Louis cried:

“Hold on! Wait! Here’s my knife. We’ll cut some long whips and whip it to death and then have some more fun.”

“Not any of that for mine,” said William. The shivers were playing hide and seek up his back bone.

“Well, you can stay away,” said Louis, “and we will whip it to death and if we don’t have a circus at school tomorrow, you’ll have to show me.”

Louis, Sanford and George each secured a long whip and went out to battle.

“Now, George,” cried William, “that may be a blue racer and if it is it will take after you and wrap you up and squeeze you to death. I will climb up on the fence.”

But the boys proceeded to the skirmish. One struck the snake about midway between the head and tail, and it began at once to coil up for a leap.

“Look out there, George,” shouted William from the top of the fence, “it’s going to jump.”

But all three whips began to play upon the snake and he was out of commission in a short time.

“Come on, William,” shouted George, “it won’t hurt you now. It’s dead.”

“No, it ain’t,” answered William, “for a snake’s tail don’t die until after sun down.”

“Well a snake’s tail won’t hurt you,” shouted George. “Come on.”

“I won’t either. You fellows can throw it in the bushes and I will climb over in the fields and go around.”

The boys dragged it to the road side and Louis hid it, for he was coming back after supper. William walked about the snake, keeping far enough away from the fence to be safe.

That evening at supper, Grandpa asked the boys how they got along at school. He was tickled over the day’s outcome, but, of course, no one found out who did it—simply some bad boys. But Grandpa had a good guess coming on the subject.

*“Haste thee, my nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jolity,
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles.”*

—MILTON.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

PRESTO

As soon as breakfast was over, George and William started for their Uncle's to go with Louis and Sanford for another day at the village school. In the meantime, someone had been busy, but to this day not more than two boys know who.

The evening before, their Uncle's big rooster had disappeared; the snake was gone—no one knew where.

"Boys," said Louis, "I wouldn't be afraid to bet a dollar that the snake is coiled up in some desk at school and the rooster is hid under the back seat."

"Go 'way!" said William, with a look of disgust. "Do you take us for a wheat?"

"Well, funny things happen anyway," said Louis.

"Well, what would keep a rooster under a seat anyway?" asked William.

“Why, didn’t you notice how those seats were made?” answered Louis. “The back seats, you see, have no desk to them and they sit clear back against the wall. The sides are all boarded in and all anyone would have to do is to set a board in front of it and our rooster couldn’t get away if anyone was to put him under there.”

“Well, that’s all right, but how could a dead snake get coiled up in someone’s desk?”

Louis never cracked a smile through it all, and George was serious.

As they drew near the play grounds they saw a ball game was on and they all started on the trot to take a whirl at the sport.

About twenty minutes to nine George spied Sonny coming on their track. Grandma had gone to the oats bin for oats for the chickens. She swung the door open and Sonny popped out. She called and tried to get him back, but he struck the trail of the boys and he was off—first to the Uncle’s and then to

school. The rhymes and parodies on "Mary's Little Lamb" began to sing out at once, for everyone now knew Sonny.

Sonny found George and William and the game of ball went on. Sonny soon got his eye on the ball and he grabbed it the first opportunity and ran with it in his mouth to George. George leaned over and Sonny played leap frog. There was a string of boys formed and Sonny went the whole length. This performance settled it once and for all so far as Sonny and the town boys were concerned. He was at once the whole works in the dog line. The professor became interested and stuck his head out of the upstairs window to watch the performance. Sonny was made to do all he knew, and all kinds of offers were made George and William for Sonny. The professor even came down stairs to pat him on the head.

As the professor came out of the door, Louis greeted him with:

"Good morning, professor, how are you feeling this morning?"

"Oh, I am all right today, thank you," he replied.

"Glad to see you looking so well today, you certainly looked sick yesterday," continued Louis.

"Yes," replied the professor, "and I was just as sick as I looked. I do not care for any more such experiences."

But the professor was not the center of attraction. Sonny was the whole show and was going the rounds, panting from the vigorous exercise.

"Well," said George, "I will have to take Sonny back to Grandma's."

"No, don't do that," shouted a dozen boys, "let him stay here. We can shut him in the coal house until recess and we can have some more fun with him."

"No, that won't do," replied George, "he would bark his head off and disturb the whole school."

"Take him up stairs and we won't bother him a bit," shouted the youngsters.

"Well, boys," said the professor turning to George and William, "if he will lie down and not disturb anyone, you can bring him inside."

“He won’t bother a soul if he’s let alone,” said George. “He will lie down and bother no one.”

The professor rang the bell and school began. George and William were given a back seat in the corner and Sonny curled up under the seat for a snooze.

The professor used the time until the morning recess in trying to find out who put the water in the bell the day before. He prefaced his investigation with the remark that George and William, nor Louis and Sanford could not have been mixed up in it, for they had so far to go into the country that they could not possibly have had anything to do with it. Every other fellow in school was on the floor answering to the charge of having been connected in some way with the doings. Not a thing developed.

Sonny was never heard from, except an occasional long breath and an occasional scratch for the flees that were inhabiting his long coat.

After recess as the pupils came back into school,

George noticed that a board closed the opening under the last seat of the middle aisle. He nudged William and said in a whisper:

“I’ll bet that Uncle Bill’s rooster is in there.”

He noticed too that two of the boys whom they had trimmed up occupied that seat. Sonny curled up for another snooze.

Things had scarcely settled down to quiet when one of the boys in the center aisle pulled his geography out of his desk, and with it a huge black snake which began slipping down one of his legs to the floor.

“Snakes! Snakes!” he yelled at the top of his voice in deadly terror, and jumped to his feet. He kicked over the board in the back of his seat in his scramble and out flopped Mr. Rooster.

Pandemonium broke loose. The girls screamed and mounted the tops of the desks, holding their skirts tight about their knees. Sonny gave a bark and took after the rooster. The boys yelled to “sick him on the snake.” In a minute he was shaking the snake

and walking backwards up the aisle toward the Professor's desk. He broke and ran in another direction for the door, at a pace that straightened out the tail of his coat flat enough to have played marbles on. A score of boys were after him, all tearing for the play ground.

Sonny did not stop until he was in the front hall with the snake, where it lay—dead, of course. What boys remained in the school house cornered the rooster and caught him. Louis took the poker and got it under the snake and tossed it out the front window, and the Professor ventured back upstairs, fully as pale as the day before when he swallowed the cigar stub.

“Sit down, girls,” said the Professor, “the snake is gone.”

“Yes, but may be there are more snakes in our desks,” replied half a dozen.

“Can't possibly be. I think you are safe,” he replied.

But the girls did not get down. Louis suggested that the Professor look through the girls' desks to satisfy them. The Professor, however, had other very pressing business to attend to and told Louis that he might examine the desks and satisfy them.

One by one the desks were emptied but never a snake was seen. William and George had stood game through it all and did not leave the room. However, William had all the school that he wanted and told George that he was going home to Grandma's with Sonny. George was also satisfied with the affair as it stood and he and William told the Professor that they would go home to Grandma's and take Sonny along.

"Well, boys," said the Professor, laying his hands on each of their shoulders, "I don't know how we could have gotten along without Sonny today. He certainly finished the snake on short notice. Come back and see us again and you may bring Sonny along."

The boys went down the stairs cautiously and

William was expecting to see snakes poking their heads out of every crack or crevice, and not until they were in sight of Grandma's did he feel a sense of security.

At dinner Grandpa was anxious to know how the day had turned out.

"Why, Grandpa," said William excitedly, "I never have seen such carryin' on's in my life as they have up there. Why yesterday those bad boys nearly drowned the Professor and he swallowed his cigar, and today there was a rooster penned up under one of the seats and a snake in one of the desks, and a boy pulled it out in his lap and it scared the boys and girls and the professor nearly to death. Gee! I never did see such a time as that, and George and I came home."

"Well, my gracious, Jack!" exclaimed Grandma with a shake of her head, "what are things coming to any way? I thought they got that new Professor to straighten things out up to school. If things keep

going on as they have been he won't last the first week."

"Don't know a thing about it, Rose Ann. You know just as much about it as I do, for all I have I've got from the boys and they were there and saw it all."

"Well, things are starting off worse than ever. I was hoping that we would have a good school this Winter, for Louis wants to get so he can pass the county examination next Spring and get to teaching."

"Well, Rose Ann, things may settle down after a while."

"If you had seen things this morning up there," said William, "you would have thought that they never would settle down. Is there something like that going on all the time, Grandpa?"

"No, not all the time. We have had good schools here until about three years ago when they let a good teacher get away simply because they wouldn't pay him twenty-five cents a day more. Since he has gone,

things have been going high handed and the pupils have been fooling their time away. Better to have been at home to work."

"Well, we got all we wanted of it, and George and I came home."

"Well, boys, what are you going to do this afternoon?" asked Grandpa.

"We haven't made out a program yet," replied George; "but we will try and get busy."

"Well," continued Grandpa, "I'm going to mill this afternoon, and if you want to you can go along."

"All right, Grandad, guess that's about our size."

Grandpa and the two boys went to the barn and filled up two bags of wheat, some oats, and corn for chop feed. Old Gin was hooked to the spring wagon and the party was off.

It was a trip long to be remembered by the boys. The mill was of the old type burr. The power was supplied by the old-fashioned water wheel, which up to this time had only been fiction to the boys.

They were from the top to the bottom, examining every nook and corner and plying questions thick and fast. The ponderous wheel which the water poured over was of no little interest and they sat and mused over it, watching the water coming from the placid race being transformed into a whirling, splashing rapid as it left the wheel and flowed on down the valley. About four o'clock Grandpa called to the boys that he was ready to go home.

At supper George and William had a graphic description of the afternoon's outing, which they regarded as the most interesting of any up-to-date.

After supper William began to take an inventory of Grandma's bric-a-brac and other objects of interest here and there about the house. Coming across the bust of Lincoln, he asked:

"Grandma, what it that?" pointing to the bust.

"Why, William," answered Grandma with some degree of surprise, "that's a bust of Lincoln."

"No, Grandma, you're wrong. You must not say bust; you must say burst."

“No, William,” continued Grandma, “bust is all right in this case.”

“No,” protested William, “my teacher told me never to say bust—always say burst, and she knows.”

“Well, what else did your teacher tell you?”

“Oh, whole lots of things! She talks too much. She just talks all the time, as if she was wound up and couldn’t run down, and I don’t remember much about what she says. She was talking about Christmas and New Years and Washington’s birthday and Easter and everything else.”

“Do you remember what they are about now?”

“Yes, all but one.”

“What was that?”

“I can’t remember what God did on the 4th of July.”

Grandma set about to straighten out William on his national and religious festal days, and congratulated herself that by bed time she regarded him well up in this particular direction.

“Well, boys,” said Grandpa, changing the topic slightly, “the squirrel law comes in tomorrow and I want a mess of squirrels. My old gun is a double barrel and is a good one for a muzzle loader, for they can’t get so high in a tree that you can’t get them.”

That set George off. He was long on gunning and shooting and he began at once to spin his yarns about what he could do. He put it so strong that Grandpa grew skeptical, though he did not say anything in reply. He chose to see what he could do the next day. George and William were in bed early to get a good night’s rest before the next day’s outing.

*“Hail, reverend hat!—sublime mid all
The minor felts that round the grovel.”*

—MOORE.

CHAPTER NINETEEN.

CROSSED WIRES.

Before day break the boys were waiting on breakfast, eager for the outing. They were cleaning the gun, getting amunition ready, the hunting coat mended and matters in general set about. Sonny was on hand wagging his tail and panting for he knew what the gun meant.

So far as the boys were concerned they had had but very little experience. They inherited a love for fire arms and woods but at this time they had a whole lot to learn about hunting.

After breakfast George shouldered the gun and the two started off. Sonny was very much in evidence. However, the forenoon was not very successful, so far as capturing game was concerned. Sonny went tearing through the woods barking and making

enough noise to scare every squirrel out of the county, and, as a result, the boys never saw a thing in the squirrel line to shoot at. They did plenty of shooting, however, but when the bell rang for dinner they started for home empty handed.

Grandpa gave them the laugh when he saw them coming and said to George:

“You couldn’t hit a ballon.”

“Got anything to bet on that, Grandpa?” asked George.

“I’ll bet my plug hat against a straw hat each for you and William that you can’t hit my hat across the road,” replied Grandpa, as a Yankee smile lighted up his face.

“I’ll take the bet,” said George, “and we’ll settle it after dinner as to who gets the hats.”

“I wouldn’t be afraid to put my plug hat on a post and let you shoot at it across the road,” continued Grandpa.

“Well, you better not do that,” said George, “or

you will have to buy a new plug hat and our straw hats besides."

"I'll chance it," said Grandpa. "At any rate, put the gun in the pantry until after dinner and we'll pull off the bet."

George was confident he would have some fun. He put the gun in the pantry and after dinner the boys took a snooze on the front porch while Grandpa fed the horses. When Grandpa came back from the barn he slipped into the pantry and pulled the shot from both barrels of the gun but left the powder undisturbed. Grandma then asked him to go to the orchard for a basket of apples and she then told George what Grandpa had done with the gun, for she did not care much if George was accurate as a marksman and tore the hat to pieces for she wanted him to have a new one anyway.

George was tickled all over in spots. He rushed for the gun and replaced a charge and a half of shot in each barrel and then resumed his place on the

porch. Grandpa returned with the apples and called to George:

“Come on now, boys, get the gun and let’s see who has to buy the hats.”

George bounded up and got the gun and Grandpa produced the plug hat shining bright as a new dollar. Grandpa put it on top of a post across the road and George took his stand. George got ready but turned around to William and said:

“William, this is a shame.”

“What’s a shame, George?” asked Grandpa.

“Why, to spoil that nice hat. Get an old one.”

“Never mind the old one. You’re backing down on the bet.”

“Oh, no, Grandpa, not me, but I hate to spoil your good hat.”

“Show me!” said Grandpa.

“Do you really mean it, Grandpa?”

“Why, certainly I do.”

“And you won’t get mad if I hit it?”

“Certainly I won’t and I’ll get you and William the straw hats and I’ll throw in a new dress for Grandma if you hit it.”

“Gee! Grandma, here’s where we all shine.”

“Hold on, George,” said Grandpa, “before you shoot I want to tell you something. Never bet on a man’s own game. You’ll lose every time. Now to show you that I am right I can tell you right now that you will lose the bet but it will be a lesson to you in the future.”

“Well, how would it be to take some of that advice to yourself, Grandpa?” asked George. “Any old time you catch me betting on a man’s own game just let me know. I did that at the County Fair last Fall and got fleeced out of all my spending money for three months. That cured me.”

“Well, here’s where you lose again,” said Grandpa. “I don’t like to take your money.”

“Don’t let that bother your conscience any, Grandpa.”

George leveled the gun and said:

"I hate to do it, but here goes."

"Shut the other eye, George," said Grandpa, as he winked at Grandma who was on hand to see the fun.

"Never mind the other eye," said George, "you just keep your eye on the hat."

George let both barrels go into the hat which went rolling into the field beyond. George and William and Grandma roared. Grandpa was completely taken down and exclaimed:

"Well, Rose Ann, what do you think of that? Well, if that don't beat me! Why, there ain't enough left of that hat to tell the story."

It was amusing even to Grandpa to see how he had been outwitted by the boys, notwithstanding the fact that he prized the hat very highly. William went across the road and secured the hat, coming back with it on his head. The whole crown was shattered and riddled for George was not over forty feet from it when he shot it.

Grandpa smiled when he saw it and said:

“Well, Rose Ann, put on your things and we will all go to town and I’ll pay the bet.”

George, William and Grandpa went to the barn to get the horse and spring wagon ready for town and Grandma, laughing over the affair, hurried to change her garb for the village.

Inasmuch as it was all a joke on Grandpa he proposed to carry it a little farther. He put on the remnants of the plug hat and wore them to the village. While there, he had as much fun telling the Squire and his political friends how he had been outwitted as George and William had with the shooting.

Grandma and the two boys went to the store for the hats and new dress. This was also central for the telephone company and the operator frequently helped out in the store. The proprietor was away at this particular time and accordingly the operator was waiting on Grandma.

A switchboard was a new one for William. He

knew all about the practical uses of the telephone but the switchboard was an object of no little interest. He got busy at once and began to amuse himself by pulling out and pushing in the pins in their receptacles. He found the peculiar little receiver worn by the operator and he soon began to get interested in what was going on over the wires. One voice he found to be that of Aunt Roxie, who had remained at home, talking to a lady friend who had attended a dance the week before, and Aunt Rox was telling her friend about Duley's experience. This, however, was ancient history to William. He heard two other women talking; one proved to be the wife of a veterinary surgeon and the other a livery man's wife. But William soon tired of this and began to amuse himself by playing with the plugs in the switchboard. He forgot which holes they were in and unconsciously he got Aunt Rox connected with the veterinary surgeon's wife, and her friend with the livery man's wife, and with but very little interruption in the conversation the two young

ladies were soon confronted with some very remarkable developments. The livery man's wife was talking.

"No, John hasn't been worth a thing since he went to the dance with the load."

"Why, how's that? He danced with the girls all evening and was in the best of spirits."

"Yes, that's just it! Girls haven't a bit of sense. Just because he was feeling good and a good looker and is a clever actor they wouldn't let him rest a minute and now he's, I'm afraid, a wreck."

"Oh, no, that can't be. But talking about his being a good looker! I should say he is. He's a joker—he simply captivated every person at the dance."

"Yes, and how about his action? Did you notice how he handled his feet? There is no 'paddle' in his gait. And that knee action! Did you ever see anything to equal it?"

"Never have seen anything like it."

“Yes, and to think that he is practically ruined for life—all for one evening’s foolishness—is simply a shame.”

“Why, what is the matter with him?”

“Well, it might be an easier answer to tell you what isn’t wrong with him than to describe his ailments. To begin with, his legs are all swollen and we have them bandaged and rub them frequently with the strongest liniment that we can find. The knee joints seem to be affected more than the rest of his legs. Then his eyes are bloodshot and he is running at the nose and his hair is all ruffled and he is simply a horrible looking object. We think he has the pink eye. Tell your husband to come over and see him as soon as he returns.”

“What? My husband!”

“Certainly, who else would we get?”

“Well, that’s a joke. Of course, you know, Roxie, I’m doing all I can to land one but up to date I haven’t succeeded.”

"Roxie! Don't you know who you are talking to?"

"Well, I think I do. I called 132-L and that's your number all right."

"Well, I should say not!"

"Well, for heaven's sake! Haven't I been talking to Roxie at all?"

"Well, I don't know whom you have been talking to but you are not talking to her now."

"Well, who is at this phone, at any rate?"

"Oh, well, never mind now. Don't get agitated, I shall not divulge any of your secrets at all."

"Well, who are you and what are you talking about?"

"Why, this is Mrs. O'Toole, the livery man's wife, and I was talking about the horse that went in the team to the dance."

"Well, that's different. This is Miss Honecomb and I was talking about a handsome young fellow that I met at the dance. We must have gotten switched off some way."

With Aunt Rox the mixup was even worse. She had been telling her friend of Duley's troubles and the condition his stomach was in from the lunch that he tried to put away. It was at this point that William had connected her with the veterinary surgeon's wife. The veterinary surgeon's wife was talking.

"Yes, that's too bad. They just called the doctor over this morning as he was suffering with acute indigestion, resulting from an overfeed which he got while out on the road."

"Is that so?"

"Indeed it is. They sent for him at six o'clock this morning with a hurry-up call for they didn't think he could live until the Doctor got there."

"You don't tell me!"

"Yes, it's so. The Doctor called me at ten o'clock and said he could not leave at all, for he was suffering everything."

"Oh, that isn't so at all. You are just trying to 'kid' me, and I won't 'kid' worth a cent. You can't tell me that all that he ate hurt him any."

“Kid nothing! Do you suppose the Doctor would go and stay all forenoon for nothing?”

“No, when the bill goes in, it will probably be very evident he didn’t go for nothing.”

“Well, that’s all right too. At two this afternoon the Doctor called me and said that he couldn’t possibly live until night.”

“What?”

“Yes, and the Doctor said that he wouldn’t leave until the end came.”

“Well, now, Miss Honecomb, you can joke me all you please about Duley, but this is carrying it a little too far.”

“No joke about it. Do you suppose that I would send such a message as this over the phone when every ear on the line is probably at their receiver—”

(At this point in the conversation the operator at central in passing the switchboard noticed William, and she suspected some mischief. Rushing up she noticed the plugs misplaced and tried to straighten

them out, but she had forgotten who was talking and connected the veterinary surgeon's wife with Miss Honecomb.)

“—And say, you can call me anything you please but Miss Honecomb, for she's the most contemptible little piece of woman flesh in the county. I simply won't stand for it—”

(The operator had been listening to see if she had them properly connected but was struck dumb when this amazing statement was shot straight into Miss Honecomb's ear. The operator remembered a call for 132-R and she grabbed the plug from Miss Honecomb's number and connected 132-L with the veterinary surgeon's wife, forgetting in her flurry that she had just disconnected this number.)

“—And say, there's a scandal going the rounds now that someone tried to poison Duley last Sunday night down at the Chapering's by putting dope in the lunch and they think it's Roxie. It's just dreadful what these two girls are up to—”

(All of which, of course, was poured into Roxie's ear. The operator then remembered whose call 132-R was and she broke this connection.)

The operator was distracted over the blunder for she feared mischief might result. She called Roxie and asked to whom she had been talking and explained the cross connection as resulting from a little fellow who had come into the store with her mother. Aunt Rox and Miss Honecomb were reconnected and they both had a laugh over it all, for the gossip floating around did not worry either of them.

Grandma had secured the new dress and hats for the boys and they started out to hunt Grandpa. They found him in an adjoining store, leaving his order for a new silk hat. When they arrived home, Aunt Rox began at once to relate the mixup on the phone and hadn't yet found out who was so sick that the Doctor had gone to see, unless it should be Duley for sure.

Grandma had a laugh and said that the veterinary had been called to see a sick horse and hadn't returned

yet when they left town but guessed that Duley was all right, inasmuch as they had heard nothing to the contrary from him direct, and she regarded no news good news.

“Well, now, ma, who’s to blame for this mixup?”

“It certainly can’t be William’s fault for he knew no better. The operator had no business to be away from the switchboard. We could have waited until the storekeeper returned. I tell you Roxie, boys are boys and that’s all you can make out of them.”

*“Memories of the golden land of morning
Haunt us in peace and strife;
Vague visions of that fresh and happy season,
The paradise of youth,
When earth was one unfading landscape.”*

ALL THE YEAR ROUND: “LONGINGS.”

CHAPTER TWENTY.

THE FINISH.

That evening a telephone message from home told the boys of an annual picnic in an adjoining village and advised that they come home and attend it. George and William were not much disposed to go home, yet decided it would probably be the wise thing to do. Grandpa told them that he would take them home in the spring wagon if they wanted him to do so. That was just the thing. The boys thought that possibly something would turn up and help to boost along some more fun.

The next morning, George, William and Sonny sauntered up the road toward the railway station hoping that something would happen to pass the time away. When they came to the station the operator had been scrubbing and the floor was still wet. The operator suggested that they shock Sonny.

“Good enough,” shouted William, “how will we do it?”

The operator placed George in a chair and put the dog on his lap. Then he sat in his chair and placed his finger on the positive pole and pointed to the negative pole, upon which he told George to place his finger and then catch hold of Sonny's foot with his other hand. The operator then held out his other hand as if to give Sonny a bit of candy. Sonny stretched out his neck to smell the supposed morsel and when he touched the finger, this, of course, completed the circuit. George was shocked and jumped, just, of course, as Sonny was shocked and jumped. Sonny jumped for the operator to square his account with him and the push of the dog sent George sprawling backwards over the chair and the operator, trying to get away from Sonny, went backwards over his chair.

William and a few in the waiting room who were watching the performance exploded at the outcome.

The scramble of George and the operator in falling over their chairs and the roar of laughter rattled Sonny and he flew to catching his tail. This was always the dog's first impulse in a roar of laughter and at this particular time saved the operator from a fracas with the dog.

"Gee," said George, with a sickly grin spreading from ear to ear, "I don't know whether the joke is on Sonny or on us. That's like getting struck with lightning. Guess I don't want any more of that."

The operator was of pretty much the same opinion as George, and reassembled himself at his seat in front of the keyboard.

George and William started down the road for Grandma's. Here Dick was hooked to the spring wagon in which were their belongings in a suitcase ready for home.

Before they were ready to go, Grandpa asked Grandma to go with him to the barn that he might show her how he wanted the chores cared for in his

absence, for he thought he would stay over night with the boys and have a visit with "Mac and Serry."

George and William and Sonny went along to pay their farewells to the farm hand and scenes of a portion of their Summer outing.

Grandpa got a long strap and asked Grandma and the boys to go along to the straw stack back of the barn to assist in pulling straw for bedding in the stable that evening.

Grandpa led off and the procession took up its line of march to the straw pile with Sonny acting as drum major.

The barn stood upon a bank. The ground sloped abruptly for about ten feet from the back of the barn, resulting from the dirt which had been scraped from the excavation for the stable. Running longitudinally under the back portion of the barn, which extended over the stable proper, was a drive way. However, once down this bank the remainder of the barnyard was practically level. At the farther side was

the straw pile, back of which, and extending on either side, was a board fence.

Sitting on the drive way was a mud boat upon which was an empty oil barrel with the head out, which Grandpa used for hauling water in the summer time for wash day, as at this season the cistern was frequently dry. The barrel sat upright upon the boat.

Grandpa, Grandma and the boys got busy at once pulling straw and placing it upon the strap.

Dan, a buck sheep, was on dress parade in the barn yard. At the sight of Sonny he stamped his foot on the ground and made for the dog. Sonny showed fight. The boys, however, yelled at Sonny and he turned in flight and Dan took after him. Sonny broke for the end of the barn for the gate but this had been swung shut. He ran up the bank and down the drive way, and seeing the barrel he jumped for it for safety not knowing, of course, that the head was out. He consequently fell into it. The buck was

so close behind that he made a pass at Sonny just as he jumped for the barrel, but instead of striking Sonny he hit the barrel, which overturned it and it started down the bank with Sonny inside.

It all happened so quickly that Sonny had not time to get out and the bank being steep the barrel shot down it and across the barn yard with Sonny scrambling and yelping inside.

“Look at that, Rose Ann!” shouted Grandpa, as the barrel shot past like a comet and struck the fence below with a thump.

“Well, by jocks, Rose Ann, Dan certainly put it all over Sonny that time. That evens up for all his pranks about here.”

Dan seemed to be satisfied with the outcome and began nibbling at a tuft of hay that he came upon.

Grandpa and Grandma resumed pulling straw but George and William tired of this and began wrestling. Sonny joined the sport and got George by the pant leg and began to shake and growl sav-

agely enough to make those not acquainted with his pranks think that he was in earnest.

The dog and William together got George down. Grandpa gave George the laugh, but George called out to Grandpa to look out for "laughing is catching."

Grandpa gathered the straw into the strap, swung it over his shoulder and started for the stable. Just as he came to the top of the bank, Dan came up from behind and gave Grandpa a butt that sent him sprawling headlong with the straw falling all over him and nearly burying him from sight.

Grandpa was upon his hands and knees in an instant to jump to his feet to get away from the buck, but before he could rise Dan gave him another thump that sent him sprawling again.

Grandma and the boys were really scared and thought to help out the situation by turning Sonny loose on the buck and they yelled "Sick him, Sonny! Sick him, Sonny!"

Sonny tore up to the fracas barking and the buck

turned in flight. Grandpa was upon his hands and knees a second time still half buried with the straw, ready to spring to his feet.

Sonny, seeing the scramble in the straw and not knowing what he was really after, rushed at Grandpa and grabbed him by the seat of the overalls and began shaking and growling.

The performance was so unexpected that it scared Grandpa. He rolled over to kick off the dog and before he knew it he and Sonny, enveloped in straw, were rolling down the bank.

“Well, of all things, boys, look at that,” shouted Grandma, “Sonny got Grandpa instead of the buck.”

George knew that Sonny was only in fun and would not hurt Grandpa, and he called out:

“Stick to it, Grandpa, you’re on top half of the time.”

The boys yelled at Sonny and he let go. Grandpa was upon his feet in a minute and called out in rage:

“Well, Rose Ann, this is certainly the finish. Beat’s anything I have ever seen or heard of. It’s bad enough to kick a man when he’s down, but to sick the dog on him is worse yet. I’ll kill that dog yet.”

“Now, Jack, the dog wasn’t to blame. I was afraid Dan would kill you and I sicked Sonny on him but he got you instead.”

“Well, that’s the first time in my life that I was ever taken for a buck sheep. Rose Ann, that’s adding insult to injury. Do I look it?” asked Grandpa as he straightened himself up in front of her.

“No, Jack, I can’t say that you do, but you’re making a whole lot of fuss about the very dog that probably saved your life.”

“There you go again, patching up the troubles that that ’tarnel dog has been makin’ around here for the last two weeks.”

“Well, Jack, Sonny certainly didn’t hurt you any for he didn’t even tear your overalls when he got hold of them.”

“Well, Rose Ann, if the overalls was all that he had hold of it would be a different matter. The way things line up now I’ll not be able to sit down with any degree of comfort for the next two weeks to come.”

“Now, Jack, you’re scared worse than you’re hurt. If Sonny nipped you a little, I have some corn salve that you can rub on and that will fix you up all right.”

“Corn salve!” shouted Grandpa, in a rage, “where do you think I wear my shoes?”

“Well, now Jack, don’t get agitated over a frivolous matter like this mixup. You know that you were wanting the boys to come up and make us a visit and liven things up about the place.”

“Well, they certainly have kept things merry since they have been here.”

“Yes, Jack, and when they go home it will be awful lonesome for a while. I wish the boys could stay all Summer for I have enjoyed every day since they have been here.”

“Well, Rose Ann, I suppose you’re right. After all when I think it over there has been a good deal of fun. That dog has written a new chapter to my experiences at any rate. Come on, boys, we’ll go to the house and get ready to go home. Rose Ann, bring out a cushion with you when we get ready to start and I’ll put it on the front seat and Sonny can ride every step of the way home, and I’ll take one of my red premium tickets that I took at the County Fair last Fall and tie it onto him for he certainly deserves some distinction.”

They all went to the house where preparations were made for the trip home.

When the boys were ready they got Sonny into the spring wagon and Grandma bade the boys good-bye and told them to be sure and come back for another visit and to bring Sonny along.

When they reached home Sonny had a great time telling Helen about his visit. He played and pranked and frisked about and did the best he could

to make himself understood, and George and William rehearsed the doings which threw light upon Sonny's actions.

George and William are still two buxom boys enjoying life as they find it and Duley is their uncle. Sonny is in clover furnishing a continuous vaudeville for the boys.

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