

Love Me Love My Dog



CAROLYN VERHOEFF



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LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG



“ ONE OF THE REPORTERS BROUGHT A CAMERA AND TOOK
BILLY’S PICTURE ”

(See page 85)

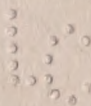
Love Me 



Love My Dog

By Carolyn Verhoeff

Illustrated by Frank T. Merrill



Boston



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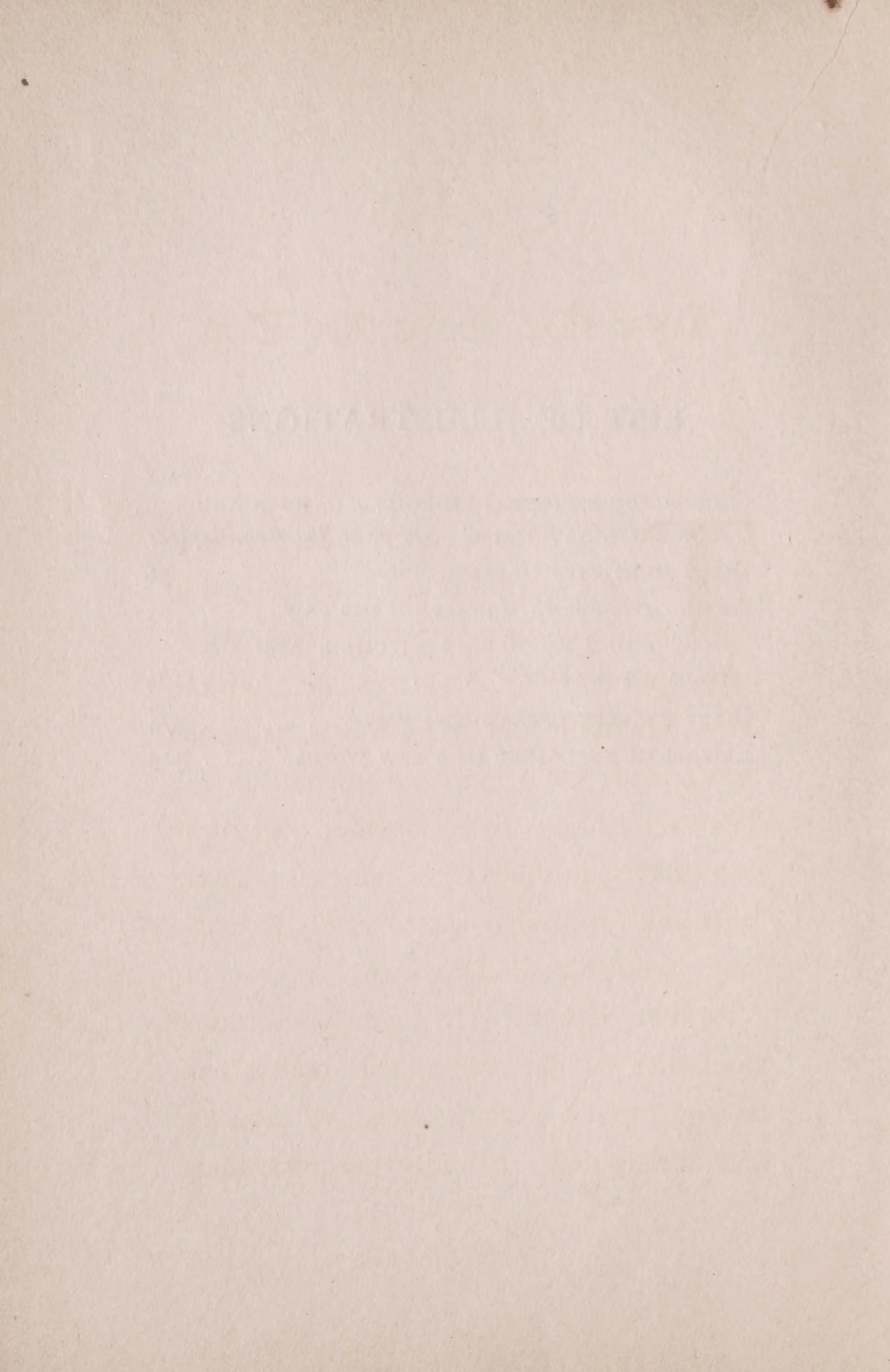
TO MY NIECES
MARY AND MARGARET VERHOEFF

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Love Me, Love My Dog

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF CONSTANCE

THE Thomsons left their home in the far south and came to live in Louisville, in the great white house just three doors from the Lewis's. Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Lewis had been best friends from their earliest childhood. They were happy to be together once more and glad that their little daughters could meet and form what would surely be a life long friendship of their own.

At first all went well. Emily welcomed Constance with unbounded enthusiasm, finding her even more attractive than she had anticipated. Proudly she introduced

her to the neighborhood, openly glorying in her new friend's golden curls and beautiful face, as well as in her ability to invent and relate stories so exciting that they held the children spellbound. Emily was blissfully unaware that her air of possession rather irritated Constance, who was, however, pleased with her admiration and devotion.

Both little girls were eleven years old, and though Constance's birthday preceded Emily's only six months, the little newcomer was considerably older in her ways. Emily was a little gypsy of a girl, with dark brown hair which no amount of coaxing could induce to curl, and eyes which shone like brown diamonds except when they grew soft with affection or sympathy. She preferred bloomers and overalls to "dress up" clothes and was as active and skillful in out door games as her brother Norman, older by two years. Constance, always

tidy and unruffled in her dainty frocks, was frequently scandalized at Emily's appearance, but at first she made no comments.

For days Emily was absorbed in the new friendship. She saw to it that Constance was included in the neighborhood play and pleasures. She could not herself bear to be separated from Constance for the space of an afternoon. At home she conversed only of Constance until even Mrs. Lewis grew bored and Mr. Lewis and the two boys openly rebelled.

Gradually the first enthusiasms subsided. Emily occasionally absented herself from Constance for a visit to Esther, her former chum, and regained a normal interest in other subjects of conversation. She went less frequently to the white house and remained a shorter time, sometimes returning home in a state of anger the cause of which she could not adequately explain.

“Constance makes me tired,” she would exclaim to her mother, “ordering me about as if I were a baby and she were grown up!”

Or, “Constance has more books, and games and toys than any girl I know, and she won’t let you touch a thing if she can help it. Before I’d be like that . . .”

Another day. “Of course Esther and I can’t speak French and German. We never had governesses to teach us. Goodness knows I’m glad we hadn’t if they would have made us like Constance. I don’t want her to read books to me that I can’t understand, and I don’t want to listen to her stories any more. She won’t listen to mine.”

When Constance came to the Lewis’s such quarrels arose that Mrs. Lewis, who loved Constance next to her own children

and had always regarded her as little less than perfect, was deeply grieved.

“I don’t know what is the matter with you, Emily,” she remonstrated. “Other children come and you play happily with them for hours at a time, but lately, the moment you see Constance you begin to quarrel.”

“Well, mother, even if Aunt Harriet is your best friend and Constance her child, I must say I never met anyone quite as aggravating. All the girls liked her at first and now nobody does.”

“I thought you would stand by her through thick and thin.”

“You don’t know how hard I have tried. I thought of course we would be best friends like you and Aunt Harriet, but Constance doesn’t want to be friends. Yesterday, I gave her back the beautiful wrist watch like hers that she brought me, and told her she

had better go home. I wish she would go on back south where she came from, though I'd miss her father. Next to Daddy I think he is the nicest man I ever knew. I don't see how he and Aunt Harriet can have such a child."

Mrs. Lewis was so hurt that Emily promised to go on trying to be friends with Constance and invited her to spend the afternoon with her and Esther. Constance came only because of her mother's insistence and went home early, though, as Mrs. Lewis realized, Emily really did try to make her have a pleasant time. Emily gave her mother an account of the afternoon.

"We started to play Sisters Going To A Ball. Constance took every decent thing to dress up in for herself, and left almost nothing for Esther and me. I didn't say a word about that. Then Esther opened her

box of jewels from the ten cent store. We started to divide them as we always do but Constance took the whole box full and put them on herself and said instead of playing Sisters we'd play Queen and she'd be the queen and we could be her tiring maids!

"Wouldn't that have been just as much fun?" Mrs. Lewis asked.

"It wasn't fair. After that, we went out in the yard to play croquet and had a dreadful fuss because every time Constance fell behind she tried to make a new rule. At the end, Constance told Esther she had let her win by not really trying herself, and she began to speak French, so Esther went home. Constance and I sat on the screened porch to tell stories. Of course dear little Goldie Bird flew down onto my finger and began to sing for us, and do you know Constance wanted me to put him in

his cage and put a cloth over it to make him hush!"

"Goldie is rather noisy sometimes."

"Well, mother, he has a right to be in his own home. I told Constance we never shut him up in his cage and I tried to show her how cunning he is. She wouldn't take a bit of interest in him and said, 'Before I'd love a bird!' and 'How could we stand anything so noisy in such a very small house.' So then I told her that if our house is small I'd rather live in it with Goldie, than in her big house with her, and she went home and I was glad."

Mrs. Lewis expostulated and Emily promised to be more patient, but the little girl avoided Constance when she could and resumed out door games with the boys. The other girls followed her lead as usual, so that Constance was left pretty much to herself.

Mrs. Thomson was disappointed and puzzled. "What is the trouble, Jess?" she asked Mrs. Lewis.

"Simply, that down there on the plantation, Constance had no playmates. Never having played with children she doesn't know how; and Emily, I much regret to say, hasn't the patience necessary to teach her. Don't worry. Constance is bound to learn in time. She is too lovely a girl not to win her own way ultimately. I confess I am disappointed in Emily. She has always been so fine and loyal, and she looked forward with such joy to Constance's friendship that it did not occur to me she would desert her."

"Constance must be to blame," Mrs. Thomson said thoughtfully. "I have never known a child with as many friends as Emily. Ask her to come to my house this

afternoon, will you? Constance isn't very well and is lonely."

Mrs. Lewis was obliged to do more than ask Emily to pay the visit to the white house. She and Esther had discovered in Esther's attic an old-fashioned bicycle with an enormous wheel in front, a tiny wheel in back, and a saddle so elevated that a ladder was necessary to mount it. On this ancient device the two little girls had planned to risk their lives that afternoon. It was therefore, with considerable grumbling that they betook themselves to the Thomsons.

In the past, whenever Constance had received visitors, if Mrs. Thomson were at home, she had retired to her own room and closed the door. To-day she left the door open.

"Now listen, Constance," she heard Emily say in a positive tone, "we'll stay as long as you play fair and talk English, but if you

act as you usually do, we'll go play out doors."

"I'll act as I please," Constance retorted.

"All right, but if you please to act like a baby, we'll leave, won't we, Esther?"

"We will," Esther answered emphatically.

"Well, don't be fussy," Constance conceded. She was tired of playing alone. "I tell you what we'll play—"

"We'll choose because we are guests," Emily interrupted. "You always insist on choosing at my house, you know. What shall we play, Esther?"

"House," Esther answered promptly. "Let's each have a room for an apartment."

"Good," Emily assented. "Which do you take and which doll?"

"I'll stay here," Esther decided, "and I want the baby doll."

"You can't have her," Constance objected.

"I never allow any one to touch her. She came from Paris and I want to keep her always. Besides, she is the last doll I ever expect to have. I am really too old to play with dolls and on my twelfth birthday I shall put her away for my children."

"I hope they will enjoy her," Emily said good humoredly. "Choose another, Esther."

While Esther was considering, Constance set about removing from the room her baby carriage, best dishes, and other prized possessions. She paused to snatch a silk parasol from Esther to add to her collection.

"Now," she said, after working industriously for several minutes. "You two may have everything else in this room."

Not much was left, but the others, trained to make the best of a situation, began choosing turn about.

"I'll take the piano," Esther said ani-

matedly, "and be a music teacher. You must bring me your children for lessons."

"That will be fun," Emily began. She was cut short by Constance.

"I forgot the piano. It isn't a toy and I can't allow you to have it. You don't know how to play, and you might ruin it by your banging."

"Esther does know how to play," Emily said indignantly. "She plays much better than you do."

"I don't agree," Constance replied in the grown up manner she could assume at pleasure and which always infuriated Emily. "Let's not play house," she hurried on seeing that Emily was on the point of leaving, "let's play a game father brought me yesterday. We played last night and I won several games even against father. It's called parchesi. It's good fun. Come on, and I'll teach you."

The others laughed at the idea of her teaching them parchesi, a game they had known for years, but as it was one of their favorites they did not refuse to play.

“I’ll take the blue men,” Constance announced. “Blue is my lucky color.”

Now the color of their counters was entirely immaterial to Emily and Esther but Constance had aroused in them both such a feeling of antagonism that they insisted first choice should be given them; and Esther chose the blues. Constance thereupon swept all the counters to the floor.

Emily’s patience was exhausted. “I promised my mother I wouldn’t call you a certain name, and I won’t, but if there ever was one, you are it.”

“What name?” Constance demanded, certain that it was not complimentary.

“Begins with a P and has three letters.”

Constance guessed the name and there

arose such a quarrel that Mrs. Thomson interfered and the two visitors departed in high dudgeon.

Mrs. Thomson who had watched and listened to the children was amazed at Constance's behavior. She decided something must be done and at once. That evening she had three conferences. One with her husband, one with Mrs. Lewis, and the third over the telephone with an acquaintance who was superintendent of a Children's Home.

Mr. Thomson was even more distressed than his wife over Constance's reported selfishness and unpopularity. He and Mrs. Lewis both agreed that in some way the attitude of the little girl must be changed, but neither quite approved of the plan that Mrs. Thomson decided upon. She, however, was so sure she was right that she made the arrangements that same night.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW COMPANION

EARLY next morning Mrs. Thomson communicated her plan to Constance.

“My dear, I have arranged to bring here a little orphan girl to live with us and be your companion for a year. She is credited with possessing a wonderful disposition, and I hope she will so improve yours that you will be able to make friends with Emily and the rest of the children.”

“I don’t wish to make friends with them. I am glad about the orphan, though. When is she coming? What is her name? How old is she? How did you find her? What room will she have? Tell me everything, mother.”

The more she heard the gladder she became. With a companion of her own she would be independent of Emily. Moreover, the orphan would be unable to leave her in a huff as Emily did when things went wrong. Mr. Thomson looked anxious when Constance exulted over the prospect and urged her mother to greater haste in her preparations to go forth to fetch the longed for companion.

“Look here, daughter,” he said, “the little girl your mother is going for has no parents or home of her own and is in consequence most unhappy. We must do all in our power to make up to her for her loss. You will share everything with her and she will stay only so long as you can keep her contented. I hope we can win her affection and make her happy.”

“Oh,” Constance murmured, looking a bit crestfallen.

Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Lewis started off in Mrs. Thomson's electric coupé. Mrs. Lewis still protested against the plan.

"Such a wild scheme isn't like you. A companion will either make Constance more selfish by giving in to her, or else will make her wretched by continual opposition. Leave Constance alone. She is intelligent enough to realize that in order to have any fun she must act differently. Give her a chance."

"Just what I propose to do. When the children avoid her now, she turns to grown people and books instead of making an effort to win friends. A companion who can't avoid her is the only solution. She will learn by adapting herself to one child to adapt herself to all. She and Emily will be good friends yet, even as you and I."

"But you think only of Constance.

What about the other child? Who is she any way?"

"Her name is Elisabeth Howard. She is exactly Constance's age, is a refined little thing, and has a most unusual disposition."

"Where does she come from? What happened to her parents?"

"A fatal automobile accident, a month ago, directly in front of the Home. Elisabeth, the only survivor, was taken into the Home and was seriously ill for several days. She is only now recovering her strength. The doctors won't allow her to be bothered with questions and as she is a very reticent child only a few facts are known."

"What are they?"

"It seems her father was in an aviation camp and met with an accident that lamed him permanently just before he was to go over seas. He had to have several operations on his foot and was honorably dis-

charged from service a short time ago. Foolishly enough he felt humiliated that he was disabled in camp instead of in action, and went away with his family to recuperate without leaving any address. Elisabeth says her father intended to go into the business of manufacturing airplanes but she doesn't know where. She says also that she has no relatives nearer than cousins, and she knows the address of none of them. Both her parents came originally from California."

"Has an effort been made to communicate with these relatives?"

"Advertisements have been inserted in the leading California papers, so far without result. Of course there are bound to be inquiries for the child as she is evidently well connected. In the meantime Elisabeth is unhappy at the Home but cannot be placed for adoption until something is

known in regard to her relatives. It seems providential to Miss Parks, the superintendent, that I should want the child for a time, and I am congratulating myself on solving my problem and performing a good deed at one and the same time. Now, what have you to say?" She smiled at her friend's serious face.

"I am afraid the poor little girl will be more miserable than ever," Mrs. Lewis answered.

"Miss Parks is sure that Elisabeth's health and spirits will improve from the moment she enters a private house."

"I hope so. At first you will have to sacrifice everything and everybody, including Constance, to the upbuilding of the child's health."

"Of course. Don't worry about her, Jessie. She isn't sick, just weak and run down. She shall have exactly the same

care and attention that Constance receives, and even more if she needs it. I wouldn't take the child if I did not expect to do my full duty by her."

"Perhaps a relative will come soon to claim her," Mrs. Lewis said hopefully.

Mrs. Thomson laughed. "One might suppose I were planning to abuse her. I certainly hope no one will claim her until she has reformed Constance. Here we are. Don't be discouraging before Miss Parks."

The superintendent met them at the door and ushered them into the reception room. "Do you care to go through the buildings to see the children, or shall Elisabeth come to you here?" she inquired.

"Let's see Elisabeth here," Mrs. Thomson answered. "From your description I think she will fill my requirements."

In a few moments a very clean little girl with dark hair arranged in two neat braids

and large pathetic gray eyes, entered the room. She was small for her age and very thin and pale. She courtesied, took her stand beside Miss Parks, and glanced timidly from one lady to the other.

She was such a forlorn little creature that Mrs. Lewis could not bear to see her standing there patiently enduring their inspection. She gathered the child to her with a few tender words and kissed the sad little face turned so appealingly to hers. Tears came into the child's eyes as she clung to her new friend almost convulsively.

"Elisabeth," Mrs. Thomson asked kindly, "would you like to go home with me to be a companion for my little girl?"

"I wish I could go with you," Elisabeth said to Mrs. Lewis.

"But she doesn't need you. Her little girl has two brothers to play with while

mine has none. We shall try to make you happy. You shall have a room of your own, pretty clothes, books, games, everything that you want, besides a little girl your own age to play with."

Mrs. Lewis's arm tightened about the slight figure. She knew the child was longing for affection of which no mention had been made.

"I live only three doors from Mrs. Thomson," she said reassuringly.

"Of course she will be glad to go," Miss Parks put in briskly.

"Have you a good yard for Billy?" Elisabeth asked.

"For Billy? Who is he?" Mrs. Thomson inquired. The superintendent showed signs of uneasiness.

Elisabeth's face brightened. "Billy is my dog. I'll call him."

Mrs. Thomson stopped her. "We won't

bother about Billy," she said with a smile. "We don't need a dog."

"Not bother about him," Elisabeth repeated in a bewildered tone. "Billy belongs to me. He is my dog."

Miss Parks began nervously to explain. "It is against our rules for the children to keep dogs but we had to make an exception in Elisabeth's case. She clung to him even when she was ill, and the physicians refused to have him sent away. Of course she will not need him now and will soon forget him in her new surroundings."

"No," Elisabeth protested, her eyes frightened, her arms extended in appeal. "Oh, no."

At that moment Billy burst into the room. He was mostly fox terrier though too large for a thoroughbred. He expressed as much joy at seeing Elisabeth as if they had been separated a week instead of

ten minutes. Elisabeth hugged him before she introduced him.

“This is my dog, Billy.”

He stepped forward politely, sniffed the two strangers, and laid his head for a moment in Mrs. Lewis’s lap. He divined immediately that she liked dogs.

“But my dear child,” Mrs. Thomson expostulated. “I can’t have that creature at my house. We’ll leave him here for the other children, and you may come to see him sometimes.”

She had never had a dog and was quite unaware of the enormity of her proposal. Anticipating no real opposition from his little mistress who appeared entirely too timid and meek to oppose any one, she was surprised when Elisabeth faced her determinedly.

“I won’t leave Billy.”

“You mustn’t say ‘I won’t’ to me, Elisabeth.”

“I know it, but I won’t leave Billy. I can’t. He is mine. I have had him ever since he was a puppy and I was a baby. He takes care of me. He sleeps with me every night—”

“Surely not,” Mrs. Thomson exclaimed in a tone of horror.

Miss Parks was apologetic. “We were obliged to let her have him on the foot of her bed. She could not sleep otherwise, but of course now that she is well—”

Elisabeth watched the grown-ups anxiously, her arms about Billy, who looked as worried as she.

Mrs. Thomson grew irritated. “I wish you had mentioned the dog over the telephone, Miss Parks.”

Mrs. Lewis spoke to her friend in an undertone. “Harriet, I’ll never speak to you

again if you try to separate that child from her dog. Either take both or neither."

"I don't like dogs," Mrs. Thomson replied in the same tone. "They are dirty creatures. Besides, that is nothing but a cur."

"A mongrel," Mrs. Lewis corrected, "with a beautiful face and a heart of gold. See how intelligently he is watching us."

"I don't know what to do. The child couldn't be more what I want if she had been made to order. She has beautiful manners. I'd never find another who would do as well. I suppose I shall have to take the dog, too, for a while. He can't enter the house though."

Mrs. Lewis turned to Elisabeth. "It's all right, honey, Billy is going with you."

Billy wagged his tail and looked less perturbed. Mrs. Lewis patted his head and talked to Elisabeth while Mrs. Thomson

signed the papers giving her possession of Elisabeth for a year, in case no legal guardian claimed the child before that time.

Miss Parks bade Elisabeth good-by with much feeling. "I shall miss you, dear. I know you will be a good little girl and make Mrs. Thomson glad to keep you."

The anxious longing expression of Elisabeth's face as she entered the coupé made Mrs. Lewis's heart ache. She would have given much to be able to take both child and dog to her own home, there to keep them always.

CHAPTER III

BILLY

CONSTANCE waited at the front gate for her mother's return. She saw Emily sauntering down the street and longed to discuss with her the expected arrival of the little companion. But Emily kept her distance. It did seem unfortunate to Constance that a girl who had started out to be such an agreeable admiring friend should have changed so completely. She hoped the new little girl wouldn't get cross and call her names.

Emily lingered in the vicinity waiting for a glimpse of Constance's companion in whose coming she was quite as much interested as Constance herself. She rather wished she had controlled her temper

yesterday so that she might with dignity call at the white house and witness the reception of the little orphan. She had never known either an orphan or a companion and was determined to be in front of the house when the coupé should return. Realizing that the event was likely to take place at any moment, she approached the gate.

“Hello,” Constance called. “I suppose Aunt Jessie told you I am expecting a companion. She should be here now.”

“Yes, mother told me.”

“It won’t matter when I have her that you and Esther don’t care to play with me. I am sure I shall enjoy her, for she has a wonderful disposition.”

“I am afraid she’ll need it,” Emily remarked.

“She will not. She is a poor little orphan and I shall try to make her happy.

She may have anything of mine that she wants and I shall play what she likes. You look as if you didn't believe me but it is true." Constance resolved that it should be true, just "to show" Emily.

Constance grew angry at Emily's expression of incredulity.

"I will be good to her, Emily Lewis. I'll make her love me. You wait and see."

Her voice penetrated to the coupé which at that moment drew up before the curb. Elisabeth heard Constance's remark and never doubting that she was referred to, flushed happily.

"Here she is!" Constance cried.

Waiting for no introduction she put her arms about Elisabeth, kissed her, though she was ordinarily not demonstrative, and drew her to the house without

even a glance at the interested Emily. Elisabeth could not know the reason for her cordial reception. She entered the gate of her new home with a face so tremulously happy that Mrs. Lewis felt a little comforted. She would not allow Mrs. Thomson to recall the two children to speak to Emily.

“No indeed, I wouldn’t have that meeting spoiled for anything.”

“The little orphan isn’t very pretty,” Emily remarked, “but when she smiled I wanted to hug her.”

“Run on in and hug her all you please,” Mrs. Thomson invited.

“No,” Mrs. Lewis prohibited.

“Horrors, they have taken that dreadful dog into the house!” Mrs. Thomson exclaimed.

“Of course they have,” Mrs. Lewis laughed. “He can’t be kept out with

Elisabeth in. Resign yourself to the inevitable and make him welcome."

"I can't. I'd like to have my car fumigated before I use it again. I hate associating with animals."

"You are not used to them. Neither was I until I married and Dick's collie came to live with us. I soon learned to love the dear old fellow. You'll soon grow used to Billy."

"I don't want to get used to him," Mrs. Thomson declared.

"I wish I could have patted him," Emily said. She followed her mother home to gain all the information possible in regard to the two interesting strangers.

Constance led Elisabeth upstairs to the apartment prepared for her.

"Your room is next to mine with a door between."

"It is a beautiful room," Elisabeth said

warmly. "I am glad it is next to yours."

"I am, too. We'll have fun together, won't we?"

Elisabeth assented. She thought she had never met a girl as lovely as Constance and told her so. Constance was equally pleased with Elisabeth. It would not be difficult to be good to such a timid and appreciative companion whose smile appealed to her as it had to Emily.

"I'll show you the house, so you will feel at home," she said hospitably.

When Mrs. Thomson entered, she heard the children chatting so happily that she did not disturb them even to order Billy turned out. He followed the little girls about, getting acquainted with his new home through a process of sniffing at everything.

Constance had accepted Billy as a necessary appendage to Elisabeth, but she was

not pleased with him. She felt somewhat afraid in spite of Elisabeth's assurance that he was the gentlest dog in the world.

"He messes things," she complained, when Billy with a wag of his long tail upset a paper doll's tea-party.

"He is sorry and will be more careful," Elisabeth apologized as she replaced the dolls.

"Put him in the yard while we play."

"I couldn't. He would cry and disturb your mother."

"He disturbs me."

"Let's all three play in the yard."

"No, I want to show you my dolls. Sit down and I'll let you hold my baby. Isn't she a beauty? She came from Paris." As she leaned down, Billy thrust his cold nose against her bare arm, startling her to such an extent that she dropped the doll. Fortunately Elisabeth caught it and no harm

was done, but Constance scolded Billy so severely that he ran to hide his head in Elisabeth's lap. She laid aside the doll to comfort the dog.

Constance lost her temper. "The idea of your being careless with my best Paris doll. I won't allow the other girls even to touch it."

Elisabeth regarded the transformed Constance in genuine amazement. Surely she must be in fun. She paraphrased her words.

"The idea of you scolding my very best dog!"

Constance relaxed somewhat. "Why do you have a dog? A doll is so much nicer."

"You can't mean that. A doll can't love you, or play with you, or go walking. A doll isn't alive."

"But you can't dress and undress a dog,

or rock him to sleep, or put him to bed, or wheel him in a carriage or—”

“Of course you can. Lend me one of your doll’s nighties and I’ll show you.”

Billy submitted to being dressed. He looked so absurd with his paws stretching out from the sleeves, and the pink ribbon tied under his chin that Constance could not help laughing. He allowed himself to be wheeled in the doll carriage, drank water from a teaspoon, and acted the part of a baby so well that Constance was charmed. She wished to continue the game indefinitely, but Elisabeth soon removed the gown and romped with Billy about the room.

“He gets tired,” she explained.

“Dolls never do,” Constance said, reverting to their argument.

“Dolls never do anything.”

“But you can pretend they do everything.”



“ BILLY SUBMITTED TO BEING DRESSED ”

"I can't. They seem silly to me."

"Then you had better go back where you came from," Constance stormed. "We can't have any fun together. I like dolls and I hate dogs."

"Don't send me back to the institution," Elisabeth pleaded. "Please don't, Constance. I'll play dolls with you. Let us stay, Billy and me. You will like Billy, I know you will, and if you will promise not to scold him, I'll promise to be careful of your dolls."

"Well," Constance agreed, and peace was restored.

Mrs. Thomson who had overheard the altercation was pleased at the settlement. She congratulated herself upon having found exactly the right child for the place. "And after a while," she thought, "when she feels more at home, we can dispose of the dog."

The more Mrs. Thomson saw of Elisabeth the better she was pleased. At luncheon she found that Elisabeth possessed excellent table manners, and was surprised to learn that she spoke French and German more fluently even than Constance. The second discovery annoyed Constance. She liked to feel superior to her companion.

After lunch Elisabeth fed Billy from scraps provided by Mandy, the colored cook. Mandy liked both dogs and children and straightway made friends of the two strangers. She promised to keep a pan of fresh water in the passageway for Billy's use and to open the kitchen door for him when he asked to go out or come in. She won Elisabeth's heart by complimenting Billy's beauty and intelligence. The little girl lingered so long in the kitchen that Constance came impatiently to find her.

“Mother says we must spend the afternoon out doors,” she complained.

“I am glad,” said Elisabeth, “and so is Billy.”

“I am not. There is more to do in the house. We’ll roller skate for a while. Father brought me new skates, yesterday, and my old ones will fit you. If any other girls come out, don’t speak to them.”

“Why not?” Elisabeth asked, surprised both at the prohibition and the commanding way in which it was given.

“Never mind why. Just don’t, that’s all.”

In Elisabeth’s stead Emily would have retorted she’d do as she pleased and a quarrel would have ensued. Mrs. Thomson in the hall above waited to hear Elisabeth’s answer. She made none but looked at Constance in such amazement that Constance was moved to add:

"I don't like them. They fuss with me and call me names."

"That's queer," Elisabeth commented gravely, as she followed Constance from the house.

As it happened she was not so proficient a skater as the other little girl, and Constance recovered her good humor in exhibiting her own prowess and helping Elisabeth to imitate her. Billy ran joyously beside them, highly approving the sport.

Naturally enough Emily and Esther came out on the sidewalk also.

"Hello," they called affably.

Constance returned the salutation with frigid politeness and drew Elisabeth firmly toward the gate. Elisabeth looked back for Billy and smiled when she saw Emily patting him. Emily returned the smile.

"Is this your dog?" she asked, by way of

entering into conversation. Of course she knew he was.

Elisabeth responded in spite of Constance's restraining hand.

"I like dogs," Emily hurried on, "but I can't have one now on account of my canary. He is as affectionate as a dog. In the mornings I take him in bed with me, and he looks too cunning with his tiny yellow head peeping from the covers. The minute I go into the house he begins to sing."

Elisabeth stopped short in her interest. "I'd love to see him," she called over her shoulder as Constance dragged her forward.

"Come now," Emily urged. "This is Esther Barton, and I am Emily Lewis. You know, it was my mother that went after you with Constance's mother."

Elisabeth turned to Constance. "You are hurting me," she said mildly. "Let's

go to Emily's house for a minute to see her mother and the canary."

"No," Constance refused angrily, walking rapidly into her yard.

"Good-by," Elisabeth called to the others as she followed.

"Listen," Constance said severely when the two were alone. "You were brought here to play with me. If you don't want to, mother will take you back."

"I don't want to go back, ever, I want to stay here with you. But I like Emily and her mother, and I don't like the way you order me about. Nobody except my Cousin—, I mean I am not used to it."

"You look as if you wouldn't mind. I won't order you, if you will play with me and leave other girls alone. You will see Emily every once in a while because her mother is my mother's best friend, and we go to her house and they come here often,

but you must remember that you are my companion and not Emily's. She has lived here always and has ever so many friends. I have been here only a few weeks and haven't any friends. That's the reason mother brought you. Come on, we'll play whatever you wish."

Elisabeth did not understand the situation, but Constance could make herself charming when she chose, and this afternoon she exerted herself to the utmost. She entertained Elisabeth with the stories for which she was noted, and enjoyed her little companion's pleasure and praise all the more because Elisabeth did not try to tell stories in her turn. The two girls passed a surprisingly happy afternoon. Mrs. Thomson was delighted with their air of content when she called them in to dress for the evening.

"They get on beautifully," she thought.

“Either that child is a marvel, or Constance was less to blame with the others than it appeared.”

After Elisabeth had bathed, and dressed herself in the dainty garments laid out for her, she went to Mrs. Thomson to be inspected. Mrs. Thomson’s appraising glance rested on her with satisfaction. She was not beautiful, or even pretty at present, being too thin and colorless, but she possessed such an air of refinement and sweetness that she was by no means unattractive even when compared with Constance who stood beside her as fresh and lovely as a rose.

They were startled by Billy’s furious barking. Elisabeth hurried down stairs after him and held him as Mr. Thomson entered the house.

“Why such a racket!” Mr. Thomson inquired.

Billy wagged his tail propitiatingly, and after a prolonged scrutiny gravely extended his paw as from one gentleman to another.

It was accepted by Mr. Thomson with equal gravity as he listened to Elisabeth's explanation.

"Billy thought you were a burglar or somebody like that. He hopes you will excuse him."

"Certainly," Mr. Thompson replied. "One can't be too careful these days." He patted the dog with one hand while he held out the other to Elisabeth. "And I am sure you are our new little girl. I am glad to have you with us, dear, you and Billy both."

Elisabeth looked up in to the kindest eyes she had ever seen and from that moment she loved Mr. Thomson, with all her lonely heart. While waiting for dinner he sat down in his great armchair on the veran-

dah. Constance took her place on his knee expecting to monopolize him as always at this time of day. Mr. Thomson saw the grieved expression on Elisabeth's face as she moved away.

"Come, dear," he invited. "I have two arms, one for each of my little girls." He lifted her up as he spoke. "You will have to eat more, though, so that you will balance Constance properly. You weigh no more than a fairy."

Elisabeth drew a deep sigh as she rested her head against his shoulder. Rightly suspecting that she was thinking of her own father, he did not try to talk to her but addressed a lot of nonsense to Constance and Billy. The dog sat on Mr. Thomson's foot as close to him as he could press. He loved Mr. Thomson, too.

Shortly after dinner Elisabeth looked so tired that Mrs. Thomson sent her to bed.

She undressed with a feeling of deep uneasiness, for Mrs. Thomson had decreed that Billy should spend the night on the back porch where Mr. Thomson had made him a comfortable bed. Elisabeth had placed him in it with loving pats and begged him to remain until morning, though she thought it was a good deal to ask of a dog who had never spent a night out of doors in his life.

For a moment or two Billy waited quietly for her return. Becoming impatient, he came to the door and barked to have it opened for him. He barked repeatedly. Mrs. Thomson bade him lie down and be quiet. Mr. Thomson twice returned him to his bed. Billy became alarmed as he finally grasped the idea that he was expected to spend the night apart from Elisabeth. He cried dismally.

Elisabeth cried in sympathy as she lay

on the luxurious bed, which she would gladly have exchanged for the institution cot with Billy at her feet. Billy's barks and howls increased.

"What shall we do?" Mrs. Thomson asked her husband, her dislike for Billy increasing every moment. "Neither we nor the neighbors can endure that frightful noise."

"Let's try him in the basement," Mr. Thomson suggested.

When the door was opened, Billy dashed in joyously and was up on Elisabeth's bed before he could be caught. Elisabeth begged to keep him with her but Mrs. Thomson was firm. He was borne down the basement steps by Mr. Thomson. He preceded that gentleman back to the top. Three times he was taken down and placed on his rug, three times he mounted the steps in advance of Mr. Thomson. Finally Mr.

Thomson closed the door and left him. Billy had to stay, but nothing could induce him to be quiet.

Mrs. Thomson advocated whipping him. Mr. Thomson refused. Constance complained bitterly of the noise. Elisabeth cried softly to herself as she heard her beloved dog scolded and berated.

"Leave him alone," Mr. Thomson said. "He may get tired and quiet down after awhile."

He didn't know Billy. The dog was wild at being separated from his little mistress on this first night in a strange house. His every instinct demanded that he be with her to guard her from harm and to comfort her loneliness. His cries grew increasingly painful.

Elisabeth could not stand them. She crept out of bed and stole softly to the basement where she was received by Billy

with the wildest manifestations of joy. The two of them curled up in a clothes basket and went sobbingly to sleep.

“Billy is quiet at last,” Mr. Thomson remarked with great relief.

“It is certainly time,” said his wife.

Before retiring she went first to Constance’s bed and then to Elisabeth’s which was of course empty. She called Mr. Thomson in alarm. He at once suspected what had happened and they went to the basement. Mrs. Thomson was angry with Elisabeth but she relented when she saw the child’s pathetic tear-dimmed face, and heard the sobs which continued even in sleep. At first Billy would not allow them to touch Elisabeth, but after Mr. Thomson had assured him of his good intentions, he permitted the little girl who was still asleep to be carried up stairs and placed in bed. He followed as a matter of course.



“ AGAIN OFFERED MR. THOMPSON HIS PAW ”

Mr. Thomson placed a large armchair beside the bed. "You may sleep there," he told Billy, who jumped into it with alacrity and again offered Mr. Thomson his paw, to show there was no hard feeling.

"You are almost human, old fellow," Mr. Thomson said with a laugh as he caressed the dog. "I am glad you gained your point to-night, and I do hope the mistress will learn to like you."

"It is too bad," Mrs. Thomson lamented, "that we can never have exactly what we want. Elisabeth would be perfect if only she hadn't that impossible animal. I am not sure I can endure him for the sake of keeping her. I may return them both unless I can induce her to give him up."

"You can never separate those two," her husband prophesized.

CHAPTER IV

MRS. THOMSON'S MISTAKE

NEXT morning Elisabeth was so languid and pale that Mrs. Thomson sent for the doctor. After a careful examination he told Mrs. Thomson his little patient needed only an abundance of rest, fresh air, and nourishing food to make her strong.

“Let her have her own way about everything possible,” he said, “and keep her out of doors.”

Mrs. Thomson carried out his directions conscientiously. Billy was allowed to occupy the armchair beside Elisabeth's bed every night, and in spite of much grumbling from Constance the children were kept out doors the greater part of every

day. Frequently Mr. Thomson took them for a drive in the country. He chose unfrequented roads that Billy might jump out and follow the car without danger from other machines, and drove slowly that he might keep up. This procedure annoyed Constance but Mr. Thomson ignored her complaints after his first explanation.

“Billy waits patiently while you and Elisabeth swing in the park and pick wild flowers along the road; it is but fair that you should be patient while he has his fun.”

To be forced to consider others instead of herself was a new experience for Constance and one to which she did not take kindly.

“It’s always ‘you can’t do this because it’s bad for Elisabeth,’ and ‘you must do that because it’s good for Elisabeth,’ and now I have to ride so slowly that I’m baked on account of Elisabeth’s dog.

“What’s the use of having a companion?” Constance asked moodily.

“Please keep us, any way,” Elisabeth begged, and Constance finally promised that she would.

As a matter of fact nothing would have distressed her more than a separation. Elisabeth by reason of her natural sweetness and desire to please, as well as because of her dread of being returned to the institution, submitted to Constance’s vagaries with remarkable patience and self-control. On her side, Constance made heroic efforts to be agreeable. She was growing fond of Elisabeth. Moreover she realized that in spite of their infrequent meetings Elisabeth and Emily were strongly attracted to each other. She determined to keep first place in Elisabeth’s affections for herself and to show Emily that she could make and keep a friend.

As a consequence the two girls quarrelled surprisingly little, and every one, especially Emily, marvelled at their general air of harmony.

Mr Thomson loved Elisabeth from the beginning. Mrs. Thomson was learning to depend upon her not only to keep Constance entertained and happy but to be helpful to herself in many ways.

“I didn't know a child could be as quick to anticipate one's wants, or as pleased to render a service,” she said to Mrs. Lewis. “Of course it isn't pleasant to have any stranger continually in one's home, but I must say I can imagine no one less objectionable than Elisabeth. If only she did not have that dog!”

Although Billy was pretty nearly as well-behaved as a dog could be, he was a sore trial to Mrs. Thomson. He was always in evidence, following Elisabeth in her

various comings and goings. He barked at every stranger who came to the house in his zeal to protect it. He was shedding and when he rolled over on rug or carpet to scratch his back he left an imprint that was difficult to eradicate. Elisabeth always hurried for the carpet sweeper but she was not always able to remove the glistening white hairs before Mrs. Thomson saw them, and Mrs. Thomson was a most particular housekeeper. Once or twice he tracked mud into the house, provoking such wrath that Elisabeth afterwards kept a cloth on the back porch and trained Billy to wait to have his paws dried before entering. Constance was interested to see how quickly he grasped her meaning and learned to lift up first one paw and then the other to be wiped.

In fact Constance soon grew more interested in Billy than she was willing to ad-

mit. She never grew tired testing his ability to understand ordinary conversation. At unexpected moments she asked him if he wanted a bath, for his answer was always to hide under the bed. He hated a bath. If, on the contrary, she asked him to do something he enjoyed, he responded at once, with eager eyes and tail in motion.

Billy was an affectionate dog and tried to make friends of every member of the household. He succeeded with all but Mrs. Thomson and Constance. Sometimes he laid his head in Constance's hand and looked up at her with soft loving eyes in a way to win a caress. But then again, when Constance spoke to Elisabeth in a cross or querulous tone, he faced her with a peculiar sound in his throat that frightened her and led her passionately to declare she would not have him in the house another day.

“If only we could get rid of Billy!” she said to her mother many times. “He is always in the way and Elisabeth pays more attention to him than she does to me.”

Mrs. Thomson listened sympathetically. “Some day we’ll find him a home in the country where dogs rightly belong,” she promised. “But we must wait until Elisabeth is stronger and has learned to feel completely at home.”

Elisabeth, fortunately unaware of Mrs. Thomson’s plans, adjusted herself to the ways of the household and made a place for herself in the family life. In spite of her growing affection for the people about her, however, she clung to Billy as to the one being left who belonged wholly to her. She poured out her heart to him as she could to no one else, feeling sure of his perfect love and understanding. Frequently she awakened in the darkness of the

night confused and trembling from dreams of her former life. Too timid to call to Mrs. Thomson for the comfort so sorely needed, she would have passed many a miserable hour except for Billy. He was always there beside her, always awakened by her need for him, always able to bring her back to reality and dissipate her fears by his warm comforting presence. Holding to him she could drop off again peacefully to sleep.

Mrs. Thomson did not understand these things. She considered it unhealthful for Billy to sleep in Elisabeth's room. She honestly believed the child would be benefited by the dog's departure.

"He is a strain on her," she thought, "and causes unnecessary friction between her and Constance. Practically the only trouble the children have now is over him. Moreover, the exertion of exercising, feed-

ing, and bathing that large animal is too much for a delicate little girl."

She began looking about for a home in the country to which she intended sending Billy as soon as she felt Elisabeth could stand the separation.

After a week or two she decided the time had come. Elisabeth had begun to gain in weight. Her color was better and she seemed much more cheerful. At the same time Billy was more in evidence than usual. It rained for three successive days and he therefore spent most of the time in the house. One day, when Mrs. Thomson and Constance entered the drawing room, they found him lying on the upholstered couch, his head resting comfortably on the real lace pillow.

"Doesn't he look cunning!" Constance exclaimed. "And isn't he clever to know what a pillow is for?"

Mrs. Thomson saw nothing cunning or clever in Billy's position. She scolded him so severely that he ran upstairs to crawl under Elisabeth's bed and could not be enticed from under it for several hours.

Mrs. Thomson set to work to rid the house of Billy. She decided to spare Elisabeth the pain of parting and arranged that the farmer with whom she had made an agreement should come for the dog on an afternoon when Mr. Thomson had invited the two little girls and three young Lewises to a matinee. Afterwards the entire Lewis family was to take dinner at the white house and Mrs. Thomson devised several pleasant surprises in the hope of distracting Elisabeth's thoughts from her dog. She kept her plan a secret from every one, even her husband and Mrs. Lewis.

On the day appointed Mr. Thomson

and the children prepared to leave in his car. Billy begged hard to be of the party though Elisabeth had spent a long time explaining to him that dogs were not allowed in theaters. He stopped sadly at the door when Elisabeth said firmly:

“No, Billy Dog, you can’t go.” He looked so grieved she ran back to comfort him with a last loving pat. “I’ll take you walking as soon as I come back if you will be a good dog and not fret.”

He understood, wagged his tail in reply, and ran to the window to see her go and to watch quiveringly for her return. An hour later the farmer stopped his wagon in front of the house and came to the door. Billy barked at him.

“He’s a good watch dog,” the old man said admiringly, “and smart looking too. He’s just the fellow I’m looking for to help me run my farm. Thank you, ma’am.

Tell the little girl I'll take good care of him and he'll have a heap of fun in the country. Come on, old fellow."

Billy's answer was a growl. He had no intention of following this stranger. When the farmer tried to attach a rope to his collar, Billy showed his teeth.

The farmer laughed. "Don't want to go home with me, eh? You'll like it when you get there, but I'm afraid the only way to take you is in a sack."

Billy didn't know what a sack was until he found himself in one, tied up so that he could not escape in spite of his frantic efforts. He was gently deposited in the wagon where he lay trembling and moaning in a manner truly piteous. The farmer spoke to him reassuringly as he drove off but nothing could quiet Billy.

"I am glad that is done," Mrs. Thomson told herself, trying to banish from her

mind the look of bewildered terror in Billy's eyes.

With no premonition of impending disaster, Elisabeth enjoyed the performance thoroughly. She laughed delightedly at the amusing comedy, joined in the fun during intermissions, and told Mr. Thomson she didn't know when she had had such a good time. But as soon as the performance was over she was anxious to get home.

"I know poor Billy has been lonesome for me," she said. "He'll be there at the window watching for me and he'll cry and almost eat me up he'll be so glad to see me."

"Mother will be at the window, too, watching for us," said little five year old Barry.

"And my mother will be watching for me," Constance added gayly.

Elisabeth's happy face clouded and the

old sad look returned. "Any way, I'm glad I have my dear old dog," she murmured.

Emily slipped her arm about her and cast an indignant glance at the thoughtless Constance.

When they approached the house, they saw that the two mothers were at the window watching for their children, but where was Billy? Not at any of the windows, that was certain. Not waiting at the front door to spring upon his little mistress in an ecstasy of joy. Frightened, Elisabeth ran into the house calling him. There was no response:

"Where is Billy?" she asked Mrs. Thomson with a little catch in her voice.

"You are warm, child. Take off your hat and sit down here beside me. I have something to tell you."

Elisabeth could not wait to take off

her hat and sit down. "Where is Billy? Is he killed? Did an automobile run over him? Oh, won't you tell me?"

"Billy is perfectly well, Elisabeth, all right in every way. He has met with no accident and I am convinced he will be well cared for."

"Mother, have you sent him away?" Constance asked, her voice trembling as she realized for the first time what his absence would mean to Elisabeth. The others stood listening.

Elisabeth's eyes grew wide with fear reminding Mrs. Thomson of Billy's. "Where is my dog?" she implored.

"Please end our suspense at once," Mr. Thomson said.

Mrs. Thomson addressed herself to Elisabeth who was trembling just like Billy. "You know that dogs like the country better than the city. Billy was always de-

lighted when Mr. Thomson took him beyond the park and let him run. Now he has gone to live on a farm, with a kind old man, Mr. Ellis, to take care of him. Don't look so tragic, child. In a few days I'll drive you out to see how well and happy he is. I sent him while you were away from home because I thought it would be easier for you. A city house is no place for a dog and you are not strong enough to have the care of one. Think what a relief it will be not to have to stop to feed him and—Why Elisabeth!"

Mrs. Thomson had expected Elisabeth to cry and perhaps protest a little but she was not prepared to see her stand quite still, lose her color, balance herself unsteadily, and drop to the floor in an abandonment of helpless grief. She was not prepared for Constance's outburst of weeping,

little Barry's clenched fist, nor her husband's exclamation as he raised the little figure in his arms.

"Harriet, I am afraid you have been cruel."

The Lewises said nothing but Emily's eyes flashed dangerously. Mrs. Lewis took Elisabeth from Mr. Thomson and cradled her in her arms.

The little girl went from one paroxysm of crying into another. Mrs. Thomson became alarmed and telephoned for Dr. Wilson. "I wish I had waited a month or two," she admitted. Nevertheless she refused Constance's plea that some one should be sent to bring Billy back.

"That would be really cruel," she said. "We cannot ask Elisabeth to undergo another parting."

Mrs. Lewis had put Elisabeth to bed and was worried over her condition. "I am

afraid the child will be seriously ill as the result of such a shock. Of course you meant well, Harriet, but you had no right to do what you did."

"I didn't realize the child would take it so hard," Mrs. Thomson said in a troubled tone.

"Where is Emily?" Mrs. Lewis asked, looking about the room.

No one knew.

"I suppose she has gone home because she could not bear to see Elisabeth's distress," Mrs. Lewis decided.

She was wrong. As soon as Emily heard Mrs. Thomson refuse to send for Billy she determined to go for him herself and return him to his owner. She was so aflame with indignation and sympathy that she did not stop to consider the propriety of her act. She knew where Mr. Ellis lived and started off to his house on her bicycle.

“Suppose it was Goldie,” she told herself as she peddled with all her strength.

As soon as Dr. Wilson saw Elisabeth, he gave her medicine to make her sleep. When she quieted down he left her in Mrs. Lewis’s care and followed the Thomsons into the adjoining room.

“I want your advice, Doctor,” Mrs. Thomson said. “My husband feels that Elisabeth should not be deprived of her dog, and that she will not recover until he is returned to her. I want to keep Elisabeth and I don’t want Billy. I believe that we can console her for his loss, and that she will be a stronger child without him. Please tell us what you think?”

“Of course Elisabeth would get over it in time,” he said. “She is only a child. Yet if I were you I’d let her keep the dog. He is probably a great comfort to her. He keeps her out of doors and he occupies her

mind. The care of an animal is educational to a child. You wouldn't mind him nearly so much after a while. We have a dog at home that we have had for fifteen years. My wife wouldn't part with him for any money, yet she disliked him intensely at first.

"It is curious how deeply attached one can get to a dog, and how if you have one of your own you become concerned about all others. Perhaps you will think I am foolish when I tell you that I am thinking quite as much about Billy as Elisabeth this evening. I know he is pitiful in his grief. Elisabeth might get over losing him, but he could not survive her loss."

"He is only a dog, and a mongrel at that!" Mrs. Thomson exclaimed.

"I am afraid you don't know dogs very well," the doctor said with a smile. "Billy will teach you a lot if you keep him. For

seven years he has been Elisabeth's shadow, giving her the whole of his great heart's devotion. If you don't bring him back he cannot live. I know dogs and I know Billy."

"That is a new idea to me," Mrs. Thomson said thoughtfully. "I have considered my own feelings and Elisabeth's feelings but it never occurred to me Billy had any feelings."

Constance begged her mother to bring Billy back. "I feel lonesome without him," she said, forgetting the many times she had complained of his being in the way, "and I feel sorry for Elisabeth. She hasn't anybody belonging to her but Billy."

"He's the only relation she has in the world," said little Barry mournfully.

Mrs. Lewis came to add her entreaties. Elisabeth, thought to be fast asleep, suddenly appeared in the doorway. Her

cheeks were crimson and her eyes very bright.

"I have to have my dog," she said desperately. "I have to have him now. I woke up and he wasn't there." She stretched out her arms to Mr. Thomson. "Won't you get him for me, now, to-night?"

"Yes," he answered, "I will."

"Elisabeth," Mrs. Thomson said quietly. "Wouldn't you rather stay here without Billy, than go back to the institution with him?"

"I want my dog." The child trembled so that she could scarcely speak but her choice was plain. Mr. Thomson carried her back to bed.

"Dinner is on the table," he said. "As soon as I have eaten a bite or two I shall start out for Billy. Go to sleep. I promise that the next time you wake Billy will be here in his chair beside you."

Elisabeth obediently closed her eyes. She had implicit confidence in Mr. Thomson.

In the next room he turned to his wife. "What is your decision, Elisabeth and Billy, or neither Elisabeth nor Billy?"

"Elisabeth and Billy, please, please," Constance begged.

Mrs. Thomson hesitated. "You don't know how much you are asking, little daughter, but I suppose I can endure Billy for a few months longer. Bring him back and he may stay as long as we keep Elisabeth."

Mrs. Lewis began to be worried about Emily when Mr. Lewis came from his home and reported she was not there. Norman guessed the truth.

"Her bicycle is gone. She has ridden out to the farm after Billy. She will have some ride. It must be at least five miles."

"I wish that child wouldn't let her heart run away with her head. She will be exhausted even if she isn't injured by a machine." Mrs. Lewis turned to her husband. "You'll have to go after her, Dick."

"I'll pick her up on my way and bring her home with Billy," Mr. Thomson said.

"I'll go with you," Mr. Lewis volunteered. "You might overlook her in the dark."

The two gentlemen departed in Mr. Thomson's car and were off at full speed. Just before they reached the farm they came upon Emily sitting disconsolately by the roadside with a punctured tire.

"I thought you would come for me," she said with her arms about her father's neck. "Please let's go on and get Billy. We can keep him at our house for Elisabeth. You will be glad to, won't you, father, for he is the dearest dog I ever knew, except our old

Laddie, and he doesn't even try to harm Goldie."

She was told of Mrs. Thomson's decision and made to realize that she had acted unwisely in starting out alone, but her good motives were praised.

When they reached the end of their journey they received a warm welcome from Mr. Ellis who said he had had his hands full.

"I wouldn't have brought the dog if I had known he'd be so homesick. He wouldn't eat nor drink nor make up with anybody though dogs usually take to me. He has just begged to go home till it was real pitiful and I had decided to take him in the morning. Seems like he's been expecting some one to come for him. He'll be glad to see you."

He was so glad that he was hysterical, crying, barking, dancing, leaping first on

one and then the other, but always leading them toward the door. In his accustomed place on the front seat of the automobile, he pressed close to Mr. Thomson, whimpering, and trembling with impatience.

When they arrived, Elisabeth was asleep, but still restless and troubled. Mr. Thomson cautioned Billy not to awaken her. That was asking too much, but even Mrs. Thomson was touched by the gentle way in which Billy approached the bed and slipped his head under the little girl's hand. Elisabeth did not wholly awaken. She felt the dog's familiar presence, gave a sigh of content, and fell into a deep and restful slumber, which continued late into the following day.

CHAPTER V

BILLY BECOMES A HERO

ELISABETH'S nature was too sweet to allow any abiding rancor toward Mrs. Thomson, now that Billy was back and she and her dog were both to be allowed to remain at the white house.

"I wish Billy could make you like him," she said wistfully. "If only robbers would break in he would show you how he could protect the house. But of course robbers never come where there is a good watch dog. Wouldn't it be great if the house should catch on fire some night? Billy would rouse us from our beds and save our lives. Then you would like him."

Mrs. Thomson laughed. "If it's all the

same to you, Elisabeth, I'd rather not undergo either a fire or a burglary even to prove Billy a hero. However, I'll promise to try to like him if you will keep him out of doors as much as possible, and off the drawing room couch and best rugs at all times."

Billy was easily trained. A few scoldings, a few retributive imprisonments in the basement, taught him the required taboos. Mrs. Thomson still regarded him as a nuisance but she no longer made complaint. Then one day something happened to convince her that even a dog can be of use.

She was about to take the two little girls down town in her electric coupé. It was a beautiful little car, always clean and highly polished. The inside was protected from the dust by dainty covers which were changed the moment a spot appeared.

No wonder Mrs. Thomson steadfastly refused the children's plea that Billy be allowed to enter, though his wagging tail and pleading eyes were hard to resist.

"Take him in the back yard and leave him there," she said to Elisabeth. "Constance, run over to Aunt Jessie's and ask if she wants anything down town. Hurry both of you. I'll wait for you in the shade across the street."

Before she could start Jennie called her into the house to the telephone. She left the door of the car ajar and the key in the switch, though she had been warned by her husband that same morning that automobile thieves had been increasingly active throughout the city. Constance ran toward the Lewis's, Elisabeth stood at the front gate calling Billy.

He wagged his tail but refused to budge from a spot he had selected directly in

front of the coupé. Elisabeth started toward the house thinking he would follow. Then several things happened.

A man emerged from behind a tree and sprang into the car. Billy sprang after him. The man grasped the steering rod with one hand and reached for the controller with the other. Billy grabbed the man's arm and hung on to it. The man dealt him a blow with his fist. Billy tightened his hold. His teeth penetrated the man's sleeve to his flesh. With an exclamation of pain and fury the would-be-thief began to rain down blows on the dog's head. Elisabeth ran screaming to Billy's aid. The man tried to escape from the car, with Billy hanging to him. Elisabeth still screaming, collided with the man and impeded his progress.

As if by magic the quiet street filled with excited people. The man was held until

the police arrived and took him into custody.

"We have been on his trail for weeks," a policeman said. "He's bagged more than one machine."

"I'd a bagged this one if it hadn't been for that dog," he boasted.

Billy, who had been detached with some difficulty, growled an answer.

The policemen drove off with their prisoner. The crowd remained to congratulate Mrs. Thomson and to laud Billy to the skies. Elisabeth beamed with pride. She couldn't be told too often how wonderful Billy was.

"He saved your car and he is a hero, isn't he?" she said to Mrs. Thomson.

"He did and he is, and I am more than grateful. Come on, old fellow, I'd rather have a car a bit soiled than no car at all. You have earned the right to ride."

"Let's stop by and tell father," Constance suggested.

To Elisabeth's delight, Mrs. Thomson consented. Not only Mr. Thomson but every one else in the newspaper office stopped to listen. One of the reporters brought a camera and took Billy's picture. Next morning, when Elisabeth read a full account of the affair, with Billy headlined and pictured as a hero, her joy knew no bounds. She was disappointed, however, that in spite of Mrs. Thomson's expressions of gratitude, that lady seemed no fonder of Billy than before.

Although Elisabeth was improving steadily in health and spirits, she did not yet feel entirely at home at the Thomsons. She realized that Mrs. Thomson felt no affection for her or Billy and that she was allowed to remain simply because Constance needed her company. Often when mother and

daughter were together Elisabeth felt in the way. At such times she longed to run over to the Lewis's where she knew the warmest of welcomes awaited her. Since this refuge was forbidden by Constance she learned to go to old colored Mandy for comfort. She always felt refreshed by her sojourn in the kitchen and usually remained there until Constance came to seek her. Mrs. Thomson was not conscious of Elisabeth's loneliness, but she considered the little girl well-bred and tactful to take herself off when she was not needed. In fact Mrs. Thomson daily congratulated herself that she had secured so satisfactory a companion.

Constance was less satisfied with Elisabeth though much fonder of her than was her mother. Elisabeth did not, for instance, take a proper interest in dolls and the plays that group themselves about dolls,

though she played patiently enough anything that Constance suggested. She was a willing listener to Constance's stories but was continually begging that Emily be invited to listen with her. Constance resented the fact that Elisabeth would have had Emily with them continually if she could.

But Elisabeth's greatest drawback was her absurd interest in animals. She couldn't pass one on the street without stopping to speak to it, no matter how great was Constance's hurry. The more forlorn and unattractive the animal the greater was Elisabeth's delay. She had indeed a most disagreeable habit of turning back with a stray dog at her heels to lead it to the alley gate where she would feed it with scraps donated by the sympathetic Mandy, and give it water from a pan which she kept for the purpose. Constance's part was to hold

on to Billy, that is if the rescued dog were fully grown, to keep him from chasing it away in his jealousy. She found waiting for Elisabeth by no means amusing, especially as Billy resented his detention and required strength to hold him.

Even that wasn't the worst. Not content with succoring the animals she met, Elisabeth insisted upon worrying about their future. Who would furnish their next meal? Where would they find shelter that night? Constance neither knew nor cared. She didn't want to be bothered. The dogs and cats didn't belong to them, she reasoned, so what business was it of theirs?

"Suppose Billy should get lost and no one would feed him? It isn't the animals' fault that they have no home," Elisabeth would contend. "They can't help being

hungry and thirsty. Somebody ought to take care of them.”

“We can’t, mother won’t let us,” was a sufficient reason to Constance for turning to more agreeable subjects.

The neighborhood was just then infested with an unusually large number of strays. Some had been turned out upon the streets by owners who could no longer afford to keep them and who had not sufficient compassion to find for them other homes. And humane people were so busy relieving human distress that they had little time to consider these other innocent victims of the high cost of living.

As a result of her indiscriminate charity Elisabeth had a bread line every day at the alley gate. Dogs and cats came at different hours but they came regularly and brought their friends. Elisabeth soon exhausted Mandy’s supplies, and though she

used all her own pocket money and as much of Constance's as she could beg away she could not obtain sufficient food.

Emily soon discovered what was going on. She and Barry brought daily their contributions of food and love pats to the strays hungry for both. Constance did not attend these alley meetings so she did not know of the strong attachment growing up between Elisabeth and Emily as a result of their common love of animals.

At last the strays became so numerous that Emily went to her parents for assistance. Mr. Lewis promptly informed Mr. Thomson of what was taking place at his alley gate, and the two gentlemen conspired with Elizabeth for the animals' relief. Most of them were gathered up and sent to good homes in the country. Mr. Ellis received three beautiful dogs to make

up to him for the loss of Billy. Others were humanely destroyed.

“It is a crime that there isn’t a decent shelter for dogs and cats in the city,” Mr. Lewis said. “The two pounds are such wretched places that one hasn’t the heart to send a dog there, and the city has no accommodations for cats.”

“We must see about that,” Mr. Thomson answered. “In the meantime you can’t be an animal rescue league all by yourself, Elisabeth.”

“I know, but I can’t let the poor things starve.”

“Of course you can’t,” Mr. Lewis agreed. “However, I think we have disposed of your collection now. If you find another stray, you may put him in the shed in my back yard. Emily will give him food and water, and I’ll attend to him when I come home at night. It isn’t right

to congregate dogs in the alley. Don't do it any more. The neighbors are complaining. Will you promise?"

Elisabeth promised gladly on condition that Mr. Thomson arrange with Constance that she be allowed to go to the Lewis's when she had a stray to deposit. Constance consented grudgingly, insisting that Elisabeth should not linger at the Lewis's after her errand was accomplished. Emily was delighted with the new arrangement. Mr. Lewis and Norman built a wire fence about the shed, divided it into two parts, and fitted it up into comfortable quarters for a dog and a cat. Elisabeth had no difficulty in providing occupants. Her only difficulty was remaining away from them and allowing Emily to attend to their feeding. Mr. Thomson as his share kept an advertisement in the daily papers for a good home for a dog and a cat. He also

made arrangements with a veterinarian to destroy in a painless manner the animals for which no homes could be found.

Elisabeth's problem was not entirely solved. She sometimes had more than one dog and cat on her hands at a time, and although she frequently huddled two or three friendly beasts in the space reserved for one, she was still unable to provide shelter for all. She faithfully kept her promise to feed no more in the alley and was compelled to allow some to go hungry with the result that she could not properly enjoy her own meals.

"Don't bother about them," Constance scolded. "They will get along all right somehow. Mother brought you here to make me happy and not to worry me with cats and dogs."

Elisabeth learned to keep her own coun-

sel to Constance's great relief and seldom referred to her charges unless she was alone with Emily or Mr. Thomson. Emily found Elisabeth so congenial that she tried in every way to make herself attractive to Constance in order to see more of the little companion. Constance was beginning to respond. She liked Elisabeth much more than Emily but she found her less interesting as a playmate. When the three played together they had a more enjoyable time than any two alone. Constance and Emily stimulated each other's inventiveness and concocted wonderful schemes for their amusement while Elisabeth kept peace between them. She acted as arbitrator in their many quarrels and they learned to accept her decisions even against themselves. In spite of herself Constance was becoming more thoughtful and less domineering as a result of her intimate contact

with Elisabeth. She was particularly considerate of her little companion when Emily was with them, and Emily was properly impressed.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW PLAN

ONE day Elisabeth ran away. Constance woke up feeling cross and unreasonable and everything that Elisabeth said or did made her more irritable. She called Elisabeth a "stupid old thing" and Elisabeth answered meekly that she supposed she was. Constance said she wished she had a companion like Emily, and Elisabeth said nothing at all but looked so hurt that Constance felt ashamed of herself and crosser than ever. Everything that Elisabeth said she contradicted, everything that Elisabeth proposed she objected to. At lunch she ignored her entirely.

Elisabeth repaired to her room for a nap.

Constance followed. She was determined to justify her ill temper by provoking a display of anger from Elisabeth, and began to berate Billy as the best means of attaining her purpose.

“I don’t see how you can keep such a dog. He’s just a cur with an unstylish long tail. If he had been worth anything his tail would have been cut when he was a puppy. His long hind legs are ridiculous. Suppose he did save mother’s car? Any dog would do that much. He is such an ugly dog that mother and I are ashamed to have him on the place. If you must have a dog why don’t you get a thoroughbred that would look like something and have some sense?”

Constance was frightened by the look on Elisabeth’s face. She tried to say that she was only in ‘fun but Elisabeth would listen to nothing more. Without a word the lit-

tle companion caught up a hat, called her dog, and ran down stairs to the front gate through which she disappeared.

She did not stop running until she had turned three corners, then paused for lack of breath. Billy wild with joy jumped upon her begging to continue the race. Suddenly her anger evaporated and she felt quite happy. Everybody knew that Billy was beautiful, and only wicked people would cut off a puppy's tail. Constance had not meant a word she said, but she would leave her alone for a while just to show her she could not make such unkind remarks. Elisabeth would not run away for keeps. She did not want to leave her present home. Besides she had nowhere else to go. She and Billy would take a walk by themselves and then go back. The day was glorious, fresh and cool after last

night's storm. She ran and skipped along, Billy prancing beside her.

At last she turned back, tired and ready to make her peace with Constance. A few blocks from home she happened to glance into a vacant lot and stood for a moment transfixed with horror. A boy was abusing a kitten. Like magic Elisabeth changed from a timid little girl who hated to quarrel into a fierce Amazon eager for battle. Without waiting for Billy some distance ahead, without pausing to consider the size and strength of the boy, she rushed onto the lot and snatched the kitten. Before the boy could recover from the surprise of her onslaught, she lowered her head, and using it as a battering ram made at him with such fury that he fell to the ground. Still unsatisfied Elisabeth kicked him. Then she

turned to flee, the kitten tightly clasped in her arms.

The boy scrambled to his feet in fury and Elisabeth would have paid heavily for her rashness had not Billy appeared. Instantly grasping the situation he placed himself in position to attack. His growl and gleaming teeth were not to be disregarded. The boy stepped back, his threatening arm falling to his side.

Elisabeth ran, calling Billy to follow. They were pursued by stones and ugly words but Elisabeth was too much engrossed with the kitten to pay much heed. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she inspected the wee animal. She hurried to the Lewis's for help, deposited the grimy kitten on Mrs. Lewis's lap, and poured out her story. Mrs. Lewis examined the kitten tenderly.

“We'll put it to sleep with some chloro-

form," she said quietly, "so that it won't suffer any more."

Unable to speak Elisabeth nodded assent. Emily, also in tears, helped her mother. In a few moments Mrs. Lewis said:

"Now, no one can ever hurt that little cat again."

Norman came in. When he heard the story repeated he expressed his indignation and wondered who the boy could have been. Elisabeth described him adding that she had heard him summoned to the house, a week ago, by the name of George.

"George Smith! That's exactly who it was. None of us fellows has any use for him. You'll have to watch out, Elisabeth. He'll get even with you some way. He'll probably torment every cat in this part of town."

"He'd better not," Elisabeth returned, "unless he wants Mr. Thomson to whip him."

"Do you know," Mrs. Lewis remarked, "I don't believe that whipping a boy like George, or knocking him down, does any good. There is always a better way to influence him."

"What else could I have done?" Elisabeth asked. "I had to get the kitten."

"Bully for you," Norman approved. "You're not the namby-pamby I thought you were."

Emily awaited her mother's answer.

"Of course you did. But you might have persuaded George to give it to you and even to promise not to mistreat another. You might have made a friend instead of an enemy."

"Not of George," Norman declared.

“You don’t know him, mother. She did the only thing possible.”

“But what is the use of saving one kitten at the expense of many others? This George must be brought to see the light somehow. Where does he live? I think we’ll give him a party.”

“Give him a party,” the children echoed in astonishment.

Mrs. Lewis laughed at their expressions, then became serious. “For some time now, ever since Elisabeth formed her bread line in the alley, I have been considering organizing a Band of Mercy. The time has come to begin. Suppose we invite the children living near, of course including George, to spend next Friday afternoon. We’ll play games first, and dance, and serve simple refreshments. Afterwards we’ll have a friend of mine give an illustrated talk on animals.

When the children's enthusiasm is aroused we'll ask them to sign the Band of Mercy pledge which is: 'I promise to try to be kind to all living creatures and to try to protect them from cruel usage.' We will have regular meetings at which each member will be asked to report his kind acts. I'll send to the Humane Society in Boston for silver star badges which the members may wear as long as they keep their pledge. We'll elect officers. Perhaps we'll make George president."

"George president! You are joking, mother," said Norman. "Nobody would vote for him. I'd better be president. Eilsabeth can be vice-president and Emily secretary. I suppose Constance will want to be treasurer."

"And what can I be?" demanded Barry.

Mrs. Lewis laughed. "How do you know that any one would vote for you!

Well, if you won't have George for president, let's appoint him chairman of a committee to report any act of cruelty committed in the neighborhood."

"I get you," Norman answered slangily, "but I don't believe your scheme will work."

Mrs. Lewis nodded wisely. "We'll see. Don't mention our plans to any one except Constance, for we don't want George to know that a conspiracy has been formed against him."

They planned the party in detail. Elisabeth began to enjoy herself so much that she quite forgot she was paying a visit in defiance of Constance's orders. Goldie was coaxed to perch on her finger and eat from her hand. The stray dog in the shed was brought in for a romp with Billy. Elisabeth was so happy that Mrs. Lewis let her stay until the last possible minute,

and then sent her home with a kiss and most cordial invitation to come again soon.

Elisabeth hurried to the white house wondering what her reception would be. She found the family awaiting her on the front porch.

“Well, little runaway,” Mr. Thomson called cheerily. “It’s time you came. I was just about to start out after you.”

“Where have you been all afternoon, Elisabeth,” Mrs. Thomson asked.

“You had no right to run away,” Constance declared.

Elisabeth slipped her hand into Mr. Thomson’s and standing close beside him told her story.

“That’s what you get for running away,” said Constance. “Why did you?”

“Because you were cross. You insulted Billy. You said—”

“Never mind what I said. You shouldn’t have gone. Mother thinks so, too.”

“That is true,” Mrs. Thomson said firmly. “You must never again leave the grounds without permission. We were worried about you until one of the children reported having seen you go to the Lewis’s.”

“I am sorry you were worried,” Elisabeth replied contritely, “I won’t run off again unless—” she looked squarely at Constance, “you meant what you said about Billy.”

“Well I didn’t,” Constance admitted. She had passed a wretchedly lonely afternoon and was so glad to have Elisabeth return she was willing to make any concession. “I just wanted to see if I could make you fly out at me for once. I won’t try again, and I love Billy really. But you must like me better than Emily, for you are my companion, not hers.”

“All right,” Elisabeth agreed, “if you will join the Band of Mercy.”

“She certainly will,” Mrs. Thomson answered for her. “You two have kept to yourselves long enough. You are strong enough now, Elisabeth, to go about more, and I want Constance to come into contact with as many children as possible. Hereafter you will accept every invitation that you receive.”

Both heard Mrs. Thomson’s pronouncement with pleasure. Elisabeth had grown tired of Constance’s imperious ways. Constance was beginning to weary of the unruffled amiability of her companion. Each would enjoy the other more when no longer isolated.

Almost every evening after dinner the family went for a short drive in Mr. Thomson’s car. Constance and her mother sat and exchanged confidences on the back

seat, while Elisabeth and Billy occupied the front seat next to Mr. Thomson. Mrs. Thomson was responsible for the arrangement. She hoped that Elisabeth, who talked more freely to Mr. Thomson than to anyone else, would tell him more about herself. For the child's own sake they were anxious to know her history and discover any relatives who might have a claim to her.

And on these evening drives Elisabeth had begun to tell a great deal about her parents and former life. She had given Mr. Thomson many clues which he was endeavoring to trace. No reply had as yet come from California. Tonight, however, Elisabeth wanted to discuss further the events of the afternoon.

"Do you think," she asked in a worried tone, "that Norman is right about George catching kittens to get even with me?"

Aunt Jessie—she lets me call her that—says I could have found a better way to rescue the kitten than by knocking George down. But I liked knocking him down. I kicked him afterwards, and I'm glad."

Mr. Thomson was silent.

"Say something," Elisabeth urged.

"Well then, I'll tell you what I think. I think your first blow was righteous. You gave the boy what he deserved. I am sorry, though, that you struck him after he was down."

"I am glad."

"I'm sure you are sorry."

"No, I'm not, truly. Do you think Aunt Jessie should make him chairman of a committee?"

"I think the plan is worth trying."

"If George hurts any more kittens, will you whip him."

“I’ll attend to him, somehow. Can’t you feel sorry for him because he has been taught no better?”

“No,” she answered. “I hate cruel people and I hate George.”

CHAPTER VII

THE BAND OF MERCY

NEXT day Mrs. Lewis investigated George and reported her findings to Elisabeth.

“The poor child has been knocked about, and more or less neglected since babyhood. He has recently come here to live with his aunt who is poor and not especially glad to have him. He doesn’t need any more whippings. He needs kindness and friendship. I am sure we can make a different boy of him by including him in our good times. I want every one to make an effort to be cordial to him Friday afternoon. You will, won’t you, Elisabeth?”

“I am not sure,” she answered doubt-

fully, "but I wish Friday would hurry up and come."

Constance was no less excited at the prospect of the party than Elisabeth. She secretly resolved to make herself as agreeable as possible that she might regain the friendship of the neighborhood children. She did not want Elisabeth to know of her unpopularity. Friday morning she helped give Billy his bath and donated one of her best hair ribbons for his adornment.

A few moments before the appointed hour, the three set forth in their white dresses and ribbon bows. Billy was very conscious of his. He held high his tail with no idea that it was "unstylish" and waved it proudly as he escorted the little girls to the red house. They received a most enthusiastic welcome.

The other guests arrived on time with the exception of George. Mrs. Lewis sent

Norman in search of him without whom the party would be a complete failure from her point of view. She was much relieved when Norman ushered in the most important guest who was so little aware of his importance that he had been unable to make up his mind to enter and was overcome to find every one so friendly. He blushed up to his ears, dug his toes in the rug, and hadn't a word to say for himself, until Billy growled at him, and Elisabeth said reassuringly:

“Don't be afraid, I won't let him hurt you.”

“I ain't afraid of any old cur like that,” he replied untruthfully. “If he bothers me, he'll get what's coming to him.”

Elisabeth feeling Mrs. Lewis's hand on her shoulder controlled herself and answered quietly:

“If you will shake hands with me and

“speak pleasantly, Billy will understand that you do not mean to harm me, and he’ll leave you alone.”

George wasn’t sure he didn’t mean to harm her at the first opportunity. Since every one was watching him expectantly, however, he awkwardly extended his hand. It was not strictly clean. Elisabeth released it at once, told Billy he was not to molest George, and withdrew to the other side of the room.

She was an object of interest to all the guests. The fact that she was different from themselves, an orphan living in a home not her own, would have been sufficient to attract them. In addition, they had heard Emily’s enthusiastic descriptions of her sweetness and courage, and she responded to their stares with her friendly smile, which as Emily declared, made one feel like hugging her. Billy fa-

cilitated the process of becoming acquainted as the children crowded about him and his mistress. Elisabeth met their advances with such a timidly friendly manner that each child felt a desire to take care of her and make her have a good time. She was in such demand that for the moment she quite forgot Constance and abandoned herself to the laughter and fun.

Constance was disregarded. For the first time she completely realized how unpopular she had made herself. She remembered that the children had gathered about her when she first came as they now gathered about Elisabeth, but whereas Elisabeth would know how to keep them for friends she had repelled them by her attitude of superiority and inability to play fair. She felt hurt and sorry, envious and angry. She decided to take Elisabeth home.

A few weeks before she would have carried out her decision at once. But Constance had not lived the past few weeks in vain. She had been forced to consider Elisabeth in many ways because of the little companion's lack of strength. She had honestly tried to be less domineering and selfish. Now she stopped to think of Elisabeth as well as of herself. She contrasted Elisabeth's present expression of happiness with the patient look that had become habitual. For the first time the thought occurred to Constance that Elisabeth's position had not been pleasant, that there had been times when the little companion had felt as wretched and lonely as she herself felt at that moment. She remembered that Elisabeth had never been ugly or unkind in spite of great provocation.

Mrs. Lewis joined Constance on the sofa.

“Why are you sitting here alone looking so sober?” she asked. “What are you thinking about?”

“Elisabeth,” Constance answered.

“Isn’t it great to see her so happy?” Mrs. Lewis said cordially. “Do you ever put yourself in her place, Constance? Suppose you should have to leave your parents to go into some one else’s home to be companion to another little girl who had everything, don’t you think she would have to be exceptionally kind to make up to you for your loss?”

Constance nodded thoughtfully.

Mrs. Lewis was called away. Emily took her place for a moment until she too had to leave in response to an invitation to dance. Constance again left alone decided to stay to the end of the party for Elisabeth’s sake. This, her first true sacrifice, brought such a sweet expression to her

face and made her so beautiful that Mrs. Lewis longed for a portrait of her as she sat there alone on the sofa.

It wasn't long before Elisabeth noticed Constance's isolation. She saw with surprise that no one except the Lewises chose her in the games or sat beside her to rest and talk. Deeply concerned she hurried to take her place beside Constance and did not leave her again. The others gathered about the sofa. Constance tried to enter into the fun and lively talk, alarmed to discover that it is easier to lose friends than to make them. She was glad when Billy snuggled up against her and put his head in her lap.

Norman had his hands full with George, who as soon as he recovered from a violent attack of bashfulness became boisterously happy. His manners were deplorable. Fastidious Elisabeth could not bear to

watch him when the refreshments were served. Constance regarded him with wide-eyed astonishment as he crammed an entire cookie into his mouth, at the same time helping himself to another.

After the ice cream and cake had been disposed of, Mrs. Lewis assembled the guests on the floor facing a sheet which had been the object of the liveliest curiosity.

“Mrs. Welton has some pictures to show you,” she said, “and some stories to tell. When she finishes I have a plan for a club.”

Mrs. Welton was so alive and interested in her subject that she held her audience spellbound. Most of the stories and pictures were of ordinary horses, dogs, cats, and birds, showing how lovable these creatures are, how happy when kindly treated, how wretched when abused or deserted. The true history of one little dog was related.

When a wee puppy the little fellow had been taken into her home by a certain woman and kindly cared for. When the puppy became a grown dog, the woman was forced to leave her house to move into an apartment where pets were not allowed. She tried in vain to find a home for Jack. Apparently no one wanted him. A friend who loved dogs advised her to put the little fellow to sleep with chloroform. The woman indignantly refused, declaring she was much too tender hearted. The day she was to move she took the trusting little animal down town, to an unfamiliar part of the city and contrived to lose him in the crowd, excusing herself by the thought that he would surely be taken up and given a home by some kind person who wanted a dog.

A picture was shown of that woman at night, fast asleep, in her warm comfortable

bed, while the little dog was shown crouching against a wall on the hard brick pavement, shivering with cold, grief, and loneliness. How much kinder the woman would have been, had she taken her friend's advice! How could she sleep after abandoning her faithful companion?

Throughout the day the little fellow had tried to find her, never dreaming she had lost him on purpose. Because he had been kindly treated he thought all people were kind. He approached hopefully every passer-by, asking with a wag of his tail and a pleading look in his beautiful eyes to be taken to his home. To his bewilderment he met with nothing but rebuffs. Some people ordered him away more or less gently. Others were harsh. Some even drove him off with blows, the first he had ever received. His tail drooped and he

slunk into corners whence he was driven by boys throwing stones. He grew hungry and thirsty. He could find nothing to eat, nothing, to drink, no one to say a kind word. Poor little dog! He couldn't understand why every one was suddenly so cruel. He had done nothing wrong. He asked only to be taken home. When night came on, for the first time in his life, he had no shelter.

The next day was a repetition of the first with added torments. A stone hurled by a great sturdy boy, five times his size, struck and broke his leg. To his loneliness, terror, and famine, was added an aching pain. He no longer appealed to people for help. He fled on his three legs when any one came near. Finally, he was so crazed for water that he cautiously approached a yard in which a bucket was standing. He was frightened away by the

mistress of the house who said she thought the dog looked mad.

He did go mad for water, and rushed wildly up and down the street. People were now afraid of him. He was reported to the police who hunted him into an alley. It is a pity his former mistress could not have seen him lying there moaning with pain. She would scarcely have recognized him so greatly was he changed by two days of misery.

Then, came along a Band of Mercy boy with love and understanding in his heart.

"Please leave him alone," he said to the policeman, "he is only hungry and thirsty and hurt."

As he spoke he placed a pan of water as near as the dog would allow him to come. He retreated and watched from a distance. The famished animal dragged itself to the pan and drank feverishly. The boy threw

him a scrap of food. He threw more, advancing slowly and speaking reassuring words in a gentle tone. Finally, the dog regained sufficient confidence to take a morsel from the boy's hand. The rest was easy. The boy alternately fed and petted him until the dog allowed himself to be lifted tenderly in the strong young arms and was borne away to peace.

But the "tender-hearted" woman never knew the misery she had caused.

Some of the stories related heroic deeds performed by dogs in war. Some were amusing incidents in the lives of wild animals. Most of them were sad. Mrs. Welton knew about George, and was determined to reach his stony heart. She talked directly to him, making the sufferings of abused animals, especially cats, so real that at last she had the satisfaction of seeing him brush away a tear.

The other more sensitive children, including Constance who was more deeply moved than she had ever been before, sobbed outright. Mrs. Welton and Mrs. Lewis having attained their object in regard to George set about restoring cheerfulness. Mrs. Welton had her most amusing pictures thrown upon the screen while Mrs. Lewis began to draw up the shades in the adjoining room for some hilarious game. Meantime Billy created a welcome diversion. Escaping from the kitchen where he had been confined with a plate of ice cream to keep him busy, he came bounding into the darkened room in time to see the life-sized picture of a dog. He immediately challenged it to battle with barks and growls, excursions and retreats. When he approached closely he found the dog had run away and a large cat stood in its place. He started to chase the cat,

struck the sheet, realized that he had been fooled, and ran to Elisabeth looking so sheepish that the children laughed.

The screen and stereopticon were then removed and light admitted. Mrs. Lewis proceeded to organize the Band of Mercy. Every one present was glad to sign the pledge and anxious to earn the right to wear the silver badge held up for inspection. It was decided to have meetings every other Friday afternoon when the members would be given an opportunity to report their kind acts.

The members promised as a means of fulfilling their pledge to provide a good home for any pet they could no longer keep: to speak kindly to, and place food and water within the reach of, any stray animal seeking refuge on their premises, but to abstain from touching such animal until some grown person had pronounced

it harmless: to keep strays until homes could be found for them, or until they could be humanely put to death: to report to the Humane Society cases of unkindness and cruelty, also the whereabouts of injured animals: to abstain from catching fireflies, butterflies, toads, and all other harmless creatures: to protect and feed the birds: to apply the golden rule alike to people and animals.

“Remember,” Mrs. Lewis said, “that you are ‘living creatures’; and therefore you have pledged yourselves to be kind to one another as well as to the animals.”

Officers were elected. Norman, at his own modest suggestion, was made president. Esther was chosen vice-president after Elisabeth refused the office declaring it would “scare her to death” to preside. Dick, Norman’s special cronie, was given the combined office of secretary and treas-

urer. George, to his astonishment, found himself chairman of the most important committee. Filled with pride he openly boasted that he would "do a plenty" to any one caught committing a cruel act. Mrs. Lewis was so pleased with his zeal in a righteous cause that she made no effort at this time to teach him moderation. She did not neglect to remind Elisabeth, however, that George was a "living creature." Elisabeth promised to be as kind to him as was possible on that account.

She and Constance went home with their arms intertwined, talking earnestly. Constance's sympathy for animals had been aroused to such a degree that she felt more congenial with Elisabeth than ever before, and she had been imbued with a real desire to be kind. Moreover, she made up her mind to win the liking of the other children. With a humility as deep as it

was new she turned to Elisabeth for advice and help.

Elisabeth was most reassuring. "Just be as nice to the others as you are most the time to me," she said with an affectionate hug which was warmly returned.

"Did you have a good time?" Mrs. Thomson asked.

"Lovely time," the little girls answered in chorus while Billy wagged his tail.

But that evening in the automobile Constance confided to her mother her disappointment that she had not been elected president of the Band. "You see, mother, I have been to so many grown people's meetings that I know better than the others how a meeting should be conducted. I could preside well, I know I could, and keep order much better than Norman. I wish the children had elected me."

Meantime Elisabeth said to Mr. Thom-

son. "I had a wonderful time and everything was lovely, but I do think Mrs. Welton might have told how Billy saved Mrs. Thomson's car from being stolen. She knew about it, she said she saw the account in the paper, but she didn't mention it once."

"Well, honey, the children in the neighborhood know of Billy's heroism."

"George doesn't. I have promised to be kind to George because he is a 'living creature,' and I shall do my best. But I'd like to have him appreciate Billy and not call him 'an old cur' again."

CHAPTER VIII

ANOTHER STRAY KITTEN

MRS. LEWIS and Mrs. Thomson sat on the porch of the white house, knitting as they talked.

"I must admit your plan has worked out much better than I expected," Mrs. Lewis said glancing toward the four girls, Constance, Elisabeth, Emily, and Esther playing contentedly down by the swing.

"It has worked far too well," Mrs. Thomson replied. "I wished a companion for Constance, not for every child in the neighborhood. There isn't a girl for blocks around who doesn't seem to think that Elisabeth was brought here for her especial benefit. Some of the boys

have a similar conception and the house is filled from morning till night. What is her power of attraction? I can understand Emily's popularity. She is so lively and adventuresome. I can understand the growing liking of the children for Constance as they know her better. She certainly is a fascinating child, if I do say it 'as shouldn't.' But what do they see in Elisabeth? She is such a quiet, meek, timid little soul that I should think she would be entirely overlooked. Why do the children love her?"

"Because she is filled to the brim with the milk of human kindness. She simply radiates friendliness, sympathy, and good will. She draws every one to her by the power of her smile. I love her dearly, don't you?"

"No, though I must say she is a helpful little girl, and her influence over Con-

stance is beneficial. Through her my child is surely being brought into contact with other children, and is learning to adapt herself to them, but the noise and confusion almost drive me wild. You don't know what a relief it is when evening comes."

"You are so difficult to satisfy," Mrs. Lewis said with a laugh. "A few weeks ago you were complaining that Constance had no company, now you complain because she has too much."

"And that isn't the worst," Mrs. Thomson continued unheedingly. "Not content to be the companion and intimate friend of every child, Elisabeth extends her affections to every animal. In most respects she is fastidiousness itself, but truly the dirtier and more unprepossessing the animal, the more Elisabeth desires it for her own. As for that club of yours, I haven't

words to express my opinion. Even Constance is being affected."

"She is becoming one of my best workers."

"You are quite right, she is. Every one in this house is. If any man in the city wishes to beat his horse, or use a tight check rein, he deliberately chooses our street for the purpose, and always when Constance and Elisabeth are at the window or in the yard. To prevent their hurling themselves upon the driver I am obliged to berate him myself, and then go to the trouble to take his number and report him to the Humane Society. As for stray dogs and cats! Well, I have simply forbidden the children to bring in another one. I will not have the premises littered up. It is enough that I am obliged to endure Billy. When I again suggested sending him to a good home in the country, not

only Elisabeth, but Constance went into hysterics. It's your fault, you know."

"Yes, I know," Mrs. Lewis answered soothingly. "I know also that you are becoming as much interested as the children, that you would under no circumstances send Billy away, and that you are beginning to look out for strays yourself. In fact you are so effective a worker that I think the Band must receive you as a member and pin a badge on you at this afternoon's meeting."

The mothers had been invited to the meeting to be held that day. Some of them were not in sympathy with the work. Their love of animals did not include stray dogs and cats. They were not as enthusiastic as the members in offering food and water to all who applied. Careful housewives complained of muddy tracks left on freshly scrubbed sidewalks. Nervous res-

idents protested against various noises emanating from basements and back yards where strays had been placed for temporary safe keeping. Mrs. Lewis wanted to convince the mothers that the compassion and sense of justice being aroused in their children and the good actually accomplished were worth some inconvenience.

The meeting was held at the Thomson's house instead of the Lewis's because it was larger. Mrs. Welton gave another illustrated talk which was enjoyed quite as much by the adults as by the children. The regular meeting followed. The president with great dignity called it to order. The members rose and repeated the pledge. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. New members were received. The roll was called and each member reported any kind act he had been able to perform.

Several reported that they had asked, in their most polite manner, men to stop whipping their horses; others that they had asked tradesmen to move horses left to stand in the hot sun into the shade. Barry became confused when called upon.

“I saw a man beating his horse,” he said, “and I asked him to put it in the shade.”

The children controlled their mirth. The grown-up, less considerate, laughed so heartily that Barry hid his head in Elisabeth’s lap. Two members told of returning a lost dog to its owner.

“It had a license tag on its collar. We telephoned to the Sinking Fund office the license number and the man gave us the owner’s name and address. We took the dog home way down to the other part of the city, and the lady was so glad to get him back that she insisted on giving us

each a dollar which we handed over to the treasurer."

"Why didn't you keep the money?" George inquired in a whisper.

"We didn't want any reward," was the indignant answer. "We were only too glad to help the dog."

The report was loudly applauded. So was the one made by Constance.

"A horse overcome by the heat in front of our house fell down. The driver kicked him. Neither mother nor Aunt Jessie was home. Elisabeth and I ran out in the street and told the man he must leave the horse alone. He said he would kick it as much as he pleased and for us to go mind our own business. We said we were minding our business and showed him our badges. I left Elisabeth to argue with him and ran in to telephone the Humane Society. When I went back I found that

Elisabeth had made friends with the man. She remembered that Aunt Jessie says you can do more good if you don't lose your temper. So Elisabeth didn't lose hers and she persuaded the man to unharness the horse so it could lie flat and let us bathe its head and mouth with cool water. We kept the flies away too. When the agent of the Humane Society came he said we had done exactly the right thing and had probably saved the horse's life. As soon as the poor fellow could get on his feet and walk, the agent led him home and talked to the owner and the driver. The driver gave Elisabeth a big red apple, and the owner telephoned my father and asked if there wasn't something he could do for Elisabeth and me. Father told him please to see that all his drivers were kind to his horses hereafter and he said he would."

Norman's story interested the members.

“One evening, after dinner, we heard a cat crying, but search as we would we could not find it. After a while Barry remembered that early in the afternoon he had seen a dog chase a kitten up the tall tree in front of our house. He had called the dog off and supposed the kitten had come down long ago. I knew that small kittens often become so frightened that they can't climb down from high places. We couldn't see the kitten but we could hear it plainly in the tree. Even when I climbed up in the tree I couldn't see it. I didn't know what to do. The poor little thing had been up there for hours and was screaming with all its might. Elisabeth suggested the firemen could help us if they would. Captain Macky is a friend of mine, and he sent one of his men as soon as I asked him. It was great fun, every one thought our house was on fire, and a crowd collected. The

fireman had spikes in his boots, so he could climb to the top of the tree. He grabbed the kitten and threw it down to mother who caught it in her shawl. It wasn't hurt and drank the milk we gave it. It's a good cat and we are trying to keep it, but we can't let it inside the house on account of Goldie."

Many members reported the rescue of one or more cats of which there seemed to be an inexhaustible supply in the neighborhood. The city provided no shelter for them and the members were at their wits' ends to know what to do with the surplus after every one allowed to keep a cat had been supplied. Mrs. Lewis reported that she had mercifully disposed of twenty by means of chloroform since the last meeting, and had found homes through newspaper advertisements for six more.

At the close of the reports Mrs. Lewis

introduced Dr. Johnson of the government health service. He made a short address.

“I have been greatly interested in the proceedings this afternoon, and I wish to tell you that I am in hearty sympathy with the objects and methods of this club. You boys and girls are becoming good citizens as well as humanitarians as you go about preventing and relieving suffering. Un-cared-for homeless animals are not only a misery to themselves but also a menace to the community. Too frequently, as a result of our neglect they become vicious and diseased inflicting injuries on human beings. They destroy our rest at night by their justifiable complaints. They distress us when we see them wandering on the streets, hungry and abused. I should like you boys and girls to remember throughout your lives and act upon the knowledge, that every animal which man has made dependent on him for

support, has a right either to a comfortable home or to a quick and merciful destruction. I may say in closing, that if every neighborhood in this city would follow your example we should soon have a safer, happier place in which to live."

Dr. Johnson spoke so earnestly that he made the mothers feel the Band of Mercy was a valuable organization, and they promised their coöperation in the future.

After the meeting, Mrs. Thomson asked Constance and Elisabeth to go on an errand. Constance demurred. She was too tired. Elisabeth offered to go without her.

"Billy needs a walk, any way."

"Daughter, I wish you were as obliging as Elisabeth," Mrs. Thomson said.

On her way back from the grocery, Elisabeth heard the cry of a cat in distress and spied a kitten so tiny that she could

scarcely believe it capable of such vociferation. A black and white ball, no larger than her hand, it sat at the gate of a vacant house bewailing its desertion. Elisabeth clasped it in her arms and wondered what to do next. The kitten, sure that its troubles were over, nestled against her with a contented purr.

Elisabeth knew she could find no home for the soft baby thing. The neighborhood was supplied and no answer had been received recently to the advertisement, "good home wanted for a cat," inserted in the daily papers. Aunt Jessie could be trusted to dispose of it in a painless manner, but it was such an unusually dear little cat that Elisabeth felt it should be allowed to grow up. Mr. Thomson and Constance would be glad to have it, she knew, but Mrs. Thomson would order it from the house. Elisabeth sighed. If only Mrs.

Thomson would grow fond of her and Billy and animals, how pleasant life would be! As it was she could see no escape for the kitten from Aunt Jessie's sleeping position. Nevertheless she carried it home.

"It's a cunning thing, much prettier than Emily's," Constance said. "Come on, I'll help you beg mother to keep it."

Elisabeth approached Mrs. Thomson timidly, holding up the kitten for inspection. "I had to pick it up," she said. "It is so little and thin, and it cried so hard. I know you don't like cats, but this is so young it won't be a real cat for a long time, and perhaps by then you won't mind. I'll take it to Aunt Jessie if you say so, but I'd like to adopt it. I would keep it out doors in the daytime and in the basement at night. Constance would help me take care of it."

Constance added her entreaties. "Let's

keep it, mother. We are the only family in the neighborhood that hasn't at least one cat, and the members of the Band are criticising us. We'll be obliged to keep it tonight, for Aunt Jessie has gone out to dinner."

Mrs. Thomson hesitated. Recently as a result of contact with Elisabeth and Billy, as well as on account of the Band's propaganda, she had become conscious of the animals about her. Formerly she had not even seen the horses, dogs, cats, she passed on the street. Now she saw them and noted their condition with an unwilling feeling of responsibility. She felt no affection for them. Even Billy aroused in her only tolerance. She would, however, at considerable cost to herself, have protected him from abuse. She was beginning to wish to protect all animals.

Moreover, the little kitten, which had

scrambled down to the floor, and sat looking inquiringly into her face, had a distinct personality. Its dignity and air of considering itself on an equality with the humans about it, were so absurdly disproportionate to its size that Mrs. Thomson was amused in spite of herself. She never desired anything in her life less than that cat, but it evidently already regarded her house as its home. She knew no other refuge could be provided for it that night, and she could not turn it out on the street.

“Oh,” she cried in exasperation. “I wish there were no cats or dogs in the world.”

“Don’t wish that,” Elisabeth implored. “It would be such a lonesome world.”

Billy returned from the pantry whither he had gone for water. To Mrs. Thomson’s amazement Elisabeth made no effort to remove the kitten from his reach, and

Billy made no effort to harm it. Instead he licked it as affectionately as its mother might have done. The little creature at first protested with hisses but finally submitted. Then Billy lay down beside it, his head resting against its tiny body.

"Is Billy used to kittens?" Mrs. Thomson asked.

"We had one until Cousin——Billy loves anything that's a baby. This kitten's name is Betsy and I am going to give her a bath."

"A bath!" Mrs. Thomson exclaimed. "Who ever heard of bathing a cat?"

"We always bathed ours," Elisabeth answered. "I was not allowed to play with any animal until the dirt and fleas had been washed off. Come on, Constance."

"I think I shall come too," Mrs. Thomson said.

Now Betsy had never heard of bathing a cat either, and objected to the full capac-

ity of her lungs. When she found herself immersed in the warm water, she squirmed and twisted and scratched. Elisabeth patiently disentangled the clinging claws and applied the soap freely. Slippery with suds, Betsy wriggled through Elisabeth's hands and sprang suddenly upon her back.

"What will you do?" Constance cried excitedly, dancing about in a way to increase the kitten's fright. "You can't reach her, and you are already drenched."

"You take her off," Elisabeth besought.

"I'm afraid. You take her, mother."

"Not for anything," Mrs. Thomson refused.

"Call Mandy," Elisabeth begged, making frantic efforts to dislodge the unhappy kitten.

Mandy hurried to the rescue. The kitten sprang from her hands onto her head

and dug its claws into her thick woolly hair.

“It’s a demon! Take it off, it’s scalping me,” screamed Mandy, rolling her eyes and making such ridiculous gyrations with her arms, that Constance and her mother were weak from laughter. Elisabeth detached the kitten and returned it to the water.

“I don’t see anything to laugh at,” she said, much offended, scrubbing the subdued kitten with tender thoroughness. “Of course Betsy was scared of the water but she would soon have grown used to it if you hadn’t made so much noise. Next time I wash her—”

“Will there be a next time?” Mrs. Thomson inquired.

“I won’t let any one watch.”

“Lawd, honey, I’d as lief wash a paper of pins,” said Mandy, ruefully rubbing her

scratches. "Dat cat's wusser'n a wil' indian wid a tommyhawk, an' ef you take my advice, you'll let her ten' to her own baths same as she's meant to."

"Cats that live with you have to be bathed," Elizabeth insisted. "See, she's sorry now."

The kitten had cuddled down in the warm towel and was purring as Elisabeth dried her. Mrs. Thomson was impressed by the fact that Elisabeth manifested no temper in spite of the scratches which must have smarted pretty badly, but handled the kitten as gently as at the beginning.

After her bath, supper and a nap, Betsy showed herself so lively and playful that Mrs. Thomson allowed her in the living room where she entertained the family with her antics.

The kitten became a strong bond between Constance and Elisabeth as together they

cared for the little creature. She was placed in the basement at night and remained there contentedly until she heard the servants stirring in the morning. Then she had a cunning way of climbing on the banisters, peering through the glass door, and tapping on it with her tiny paw, until the door was opened for her. In the daytime she followed the children and Billy about the yard with the air of being quite as big as they. When they came into the house, she demanded admittance also, and with such pertinacity that denial was difficult. Gradually she became established as a member of the household and was tolerated by Mrs. Thomson even as Billy.

Betsy seemed to feel the necessity of placating Mrs. Thomson. She brought to her the occasional mouse she caught, though Mrs. Thomson was less appreciative than she expected. Elisabeth and Betsy had a

chronic disagreement on the subject of mice. Elisabeth insisted that they be instantly dispatched and covered them with ill-smelling cotton so that they would not run any more. Betsy liked to play with her victims and resented Elisabeth's interference. In other respects, however, she found the little girl so satisfactory that she preferred her to every one else. Every one except Billy. She learned to love him best of all her world. She played with him, rubbed against him purring loudly, kissed him affectionately, and took her naps with her head against his. When their meals were served, she frequently ignored her saucer to share the contents of his. Billy objected. He preferred to eat alone. When, however, she went on calmly taking her fill, paying no attention to his growls because she knew he would not hurt her, he would look up at Elisabeth with a comical

expression of perplexity, as much as to say: "What can you do with a cat like that?" Their friendship attracted much attention, all of the Band coming to see the two together.

For the most part, now, Elisabeth was a happy little girl. She had gained many pounds during her two months with the Thomsons, and her eyes had lost something of their sadness. She felt sure of Mr. Thomson's affection, and of Constance's. Some day she hoped Mrs. Thomson would love her, too.

CHAPTER IX

ELISABETH IS GRIEVED

CONSTANCE, who had never been to school, looked forward to going with the liveliest anticipation. She and Elisabeth were both glad when Mrs. Thomson yielded to her husband's wish in the matter and allowed them to enter the public school with the rest of the children early in September.

But Constance was disappointed in school. She was humiliated to discover that she was far behind her class in certain subjects, so that the teachers talked of putting her back a grade, below Elisabeth and Emily, when she had supposed herself much further advanced than they. She found the school discipline irksome and broke so

many rules that she was in continual trouble. The other pupils instead of admiring her independence laughed at her "for behaving like a kindergarten baby." If it had not been for Elisabeth who stood by her loyally, helping her with the difficult problems in Arithmetic and making her peace with teachers and pupils, Constance would probably have returned to the care of a governess. As it was, she gradually settled down to the daily routine, and with Elisabeth's help managed to keep up with the class. Soon she found she was enjoying school as much as she had hoped to.

Elisabeth was vastly relieved. George remained, then, the only disturbing element in her busy, happy life. Although George was now an indefatigable worker in the Band of Mercy, he had not forgiven Elisabeth for the incident which brought him membership. He tormented no more

cats; he tormented Elisabeth instead. As he was in the same grade at school, opportunities to annoy her were amply sufficient. He pulled her braids, knocked her books from under her arm, erased her work from the board "by mistake" before it had been approved, turned over a bottle of ink on her dress, tripped her as she went up or down stairs. She could have put an end to his petty persecution by complaining to the teachers, but it was against the school code to bear tales, and besides she was honestly trying at Mrs. Lewis's instigation to be kind to George. In fact George and his pranks disturbed her but little since they were directed toward herself instead of animals, and she was pretty well content with her life both at school and at home.

Until one day she overheard part of a

conversation between Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Lewis.

The two ladies were in the living room enjoying a quiet chat, unaware that their voices could reach Elisabeth who was studying on the veranda. She did not intentionally eavesdrop, but heard her name just as she closed her book, and was too hurt and bewildered immediately to go away.

“I wish some relative would come along to claim Elisabeth,” Mrs. Thomson said. “She has accomplished the purpose for which I brought her in a remarkably short time, and we really do not need her any longer. Constance is doing well at school and is making a place for herself among the children. Emily seems quite fond of her again.”

“Surely you would not send Elisabeth

away when she has done so much for Constance.”

“Of course not, but I would be glad to turn her over to relatives. You don’t know how I long to be alone with my family once more! Elisabeth is such an exceptional child that I am sure her relatives would be glad to have her if we could find them.”

“I should miss her,” Mrs. Lewis said.

“We all would. Constance would be lost for a while. She is really becoming too dependent on her considering the fact that we do not expect to keep her always. It is a queer thing that we can find none of the child’s relations. John has followed every clue she has given him. I think she is concealing something from us, have always thought so. You know there must be some explanation of the fact that

a child like Elisabeth could be left unclaimed for four months.”

“You must remember that very little prominence was given by the papers to the accident. It is quite possible that the California cousins have never heard of it. You see it happened during a week of exciting foreign news, and I doubt if it were copied by papers of other cities.”

“Perhaps. I do wish Elisabeth would tell all she knows.”

Elisabeth ran up to her own room and closed the door. She threw herself on the floor beside Billy and burst into tears.

“Oh, Billy Dog,” she moaned. “Mrs. Thomson doesn’t want us any more. What shall we do? We can’t go to Cousin Anne. She wouldn’t let me keep you. Besides, she is way over in France. At least I suppose she is. She’d have me sent to boarding school, and I couldn’t

stand it without you. Oh, Billy, I thought they wanted us and needed us, and they don't and we've nowhere else to go."

From that moment Elisabeth became as dejected in appearance as she had been at the institution four months before. Every one was worried and tried to find the cause of her trouble. Mrs. Thomson called the doctor. He could find no physical cause for the little girl's appearance. Mrs. Lewis and Constance sought her confidence in vain. Mr. Thomson was away on a business trip. His wife wrote him to come home sooner than he intended, on Elisabeth's account.

His arrival caused the little girl to become more animated, and that afternoon seated beside him in his car she chatted so happily that he concluded his wife had been needlessly worried.

"Always in books," she began, "the

little girl turns out to be the niece or some relation of the people she goes to live with. I wish I'd turn out to be yours."

"So do I, but since each of my brothers and sisters is accounted for, I am afraid such a thing isn't possible."

"I know it," she said with a sigh. "When I was little, I couldn't understand why I didn't have aunts and uncles like other children, and only grown up cousins. My father and mother hadn't any brothers or sisters and they were both orphans like me, only father had an uncle and mother had a step-mother when they were children. Sometimes I pretend that you are my uncle and that I really belong to you."

"Would you like to call me 'Uncle John' as Emily does?"

"Yes," she answered.

"But are you sure, little girl, that there

isn't some one somewhere to whom you do belong even more than to me?"

Elisabeth twisted uneasily in her seat and clutched Billy so tight that he gave a surprised yelp.

"I don't think you belong to people unless you love them," she answered. "My father knew a man who thought he owned a dog, but the dog didn't like that man and kept running away to a man he did like, and both the men bought him a license, and each said he was his, and they went before a judge. The judge said: 'Let the dog decide.' Both men called him, and he went to the one he loved, and the judge said he belonged to that man, and I think the judge was right. My father thought so, too. I told Mandy about it and she thought the judge was right. I love Mandy. Whenever I feel low in my mind, as she says, Billy and I go to the



“ “ BILLY AND I GO TO THE KITCHEN, AND SHE TELLS US STORIES ” ”

kitchen and she tells us stories about Snowball her coal-black cat. She thinks Snowball is the most sensible cat in the world but I know he isn't as clever as Betsy. What do you suppose Betsy did to-day?"

"I can't imagine."

"She jumped on my dresser and pulled the pins out of my cushion with her teeth, and she didn't swallow even one. She grows more cunning and affectionate every day. Most cats draw away when you put your hand down to pat them, but Betsy raises up her head to meet your hand. She always answers me when I call her. She is afraid of other cats and runs to Billy for protection. George said he never saw a cat run to a dog before."

"I want to tell you about George," she continued rapidly, perhaps to prevent the questions which she knew Mr. Thomson was about to ask her. "He is good to ani-

mals now. Norman and Dick and Ralph have been watching him. They play they are three famous detectives. They wanted me to give him the poodle I found. I was afraid to: it was such a baby, so George dislikes me more than ever. Mr. Lewis bought him a great big dog at the pound and he tries to make it fight Billy. It's too bad George dislikes me. No one ever did before except Cousin—" She stopped short with an alarmed look at Mr. Thomson.

He, however, had not heard, being occupied just then in passing another car in a narrow road. Elisabeth kept up her chatter throughout the drive and Mr. Thomson returned home none the wiser as to the cause of the little girl's depression.

That night Elisabeth had a struggle with her conscience.

"Now that Uncle John has come home, you must tell him about Cousin Anne," Conscience said sternly.

"I don't know her address."

"He could find it."

"She'd send me off to boarding school."

"You have no right to stay here where you aren't wanted."

"Everybody wants me except Mrs. Thomson."

"It's her house."

"I don't want to go away. I don't want to belong to Cousin Anne. What could I do without Billy? What would happen to Betsey? I don't want Cousin Anne to know where I am."

"She will know some day and she will be angry because you didn't tell at first. The Thomsons will be angry too, especially Mrs. Thomson. You had better tell Uncle John the truth in the morning, and

not stay another day where you are not wanted.”

“I’ll tell in the morning, truly I will,” she finally resolved.

Meantime Mr. and Mrs. Thomson were discussing Elisabeth in their own room.

“Well, then, John, if it is absolutely necessary for you to take that long journey across the ocean, right now, when conditions are still so unsettled and dangerous, I shall of course keep Elisabeth until you return; but you must discover the cause of her trouble. I shall be worried about you every moment and I cannot worry over her as well. I know she is concealing something from us and I must know what it is before you leave.”

“I’ll have a long talk with her, to-morrow,” he promised.

Mrs. Thomson had known for some time

of her husband's proposed trip. She had asked him not to mention it to the children until the last moment secretly hoping something would prevent his going. Now however, they must be told, for he was planning to leave within ten days.

He broke the news to Constance first. She was distressed at the thought of separation but comforted by the prospect of a trip to New York to see her father sail, and the promise of letters and gifts from abroad.

This interview having proved so satisfactory, Mr. Thomson went in search of Elisabeth with no misgivings. He took the little girl in his arms.

"Honey, you must tell me a number of things. Why you have looked so pale and sad lately and been 'low in your mind'? What is the secret you are hiding away from all of us who love you? Why is it

no one has come to ask us about you? Next week I must go away for awhile, across the sea, and I cannot leave until you have told me all you know about yourself."

"You are going away?" Elisabeth gasped as though stunned by a heavy blow.

"Yes, but I shall be gone but a short time, not more than two months probably."

"Two months! Oh, what shall I do!" She began to cry so despairingly that Mr. Thomson grew alarmed.

"Find Cousin Anne," she sobbed. "She'll take me away and you'll never see me again."

"Who is Cousin Anne, Elisabeth?"

"Why, father's cousin. When he was twelve years old and an orphan she brought him up, and now she'll bring me

up, and she is the most awful person in the world.”

“Where does she live?”

“I don’t know her address. I don’t truly. She is over in France. She has lived there mostly since she was grown. Once she lived here in this very city with her father and my father until they all went to Europe. They lived in a big house but I don’t know on what street. That last day in the automobile we were on our way to the house. We stopped here just to see it and then we never did.”

“To whom does it belong?”

“To me, father said so; but I can’t go live in it, for I don’t know where it is. Cousin Anne was living in Paris when France went to war. She came home and visited us for ever and ever so long. I thought she would never go away, but she did. When father went to the camp to be

an aviator, she went back to work in the Red Cross and I was glad and so was my mother. Father expected to see her when he went to France but they kept him here to teach other men to be aviators and wouldn't let him go and mother and I were glad, though we couldn't see him often. Father said if anything happened to him, Cousin Anne would take care of mother and me, and mother said no, we would take care of ourselves, because we didn't like her."

"Do you realize you are greatly to blame for keeping this information from me?"

Elisabeth flushed crimson at his tone and a rush of tears prevented an immediate answer.

"But you don't know Cousin Anne," she finally defended herself. "You wouldn't want her to take care of you either. She is cross the whole time. She

loathes children and dogs and cats and everything like that. She wouldn't let me talk or make any noise. If I did, she'd ask mother why she didn't send me to boarding school. She stamped her foot at Billy whenever he came near her. And do you know what she did to my kitten? She threw it out of her room and hurt it.

“She liked my father and that's all. He liked her, and said that some day we'd live with her here in the big old house that belongs to me, but mother said no house was big enough for us and Cousin Anne. Father said I must love her on account of him, and because she was taking care of money and property and such things for me. I couldn't love her then and I can't love her now. I hoped she'd never know where I was. I hoped maybe the Germans would get her. But now you are going away I don't care what happens

and if she wants me, she can have me.

“Only of course she’d send me to boarding school where I couldn’t have Billy. Perhaps we had better go back to the Home. But I don’t want to. I don’t want to belong to Cousin Anne. I want to belong to you. I didn’t think you would go away and leave me. Nobody loves me and I’m the most miserable child in the world.”

Mr. Thomson soothed her as best he could, assuring her again and again of his affection.

“If you loved me, you wouldn’t leave me,” she repeated.

“I am leaving Mrs. Thomson and Constance.”

“They have each other.”

“And you have them.”

“Mrs. Thomson doesn’t want me. I heard her tell Aunt Jessie so. That is

why I was so wretched. She said Constance didn't need me any more."

"She will need you while I am away and so will her mother. They themselves will tell you how much. I shall find your cousin's address and send her a cablegram at once. Perhaps I shall see her in France, and I shall ask her to let you stay here with us."

Mr. Thomson reported his conversation with Elisabeth to Mrs. Thomson and Constance. Both were intensely interested. Constance hurried to scold the little companion for daring to keep a secret from her.

"Tell me every single thing about this Cousin Anne," she commanded. "If she thinks she can take you away from me she's mistaken. I couldn't get along without you ever again."

Mrs. Thomson was much relieved. "I

thought it strange," she said to her husband, "that Mr. Howard had made no provision for his daughter. We must communicate with this cousin, but I am glad she is so far away that there is no danger of her taking Elisabeth at once."

To Elisabeth she said with great cordiality: "Constance will need you more than ever while her father is abroad. I am grateful that we may still keep you."

In spite of her grief over Mr. Thomson's imminent departure, Elisabeth's mind was more at rest than at any time since the accident. With the revealing of her secret she felt as though a great burden had been removed. Moreover she knew she was welcome to stay with the Thomsons now until Cousin Anne should come for her. She hoped that would not be soon.

Up to the moment of departure Mr. Thomson kept Elisabeth and Constance

busy with his affairs when they were not occupied with school and lessons. Every afternoon they went on some sort of pleasure expedition. Billy was usually of the party, for he needed to have his mind diverted as well as the others. His eyes mourned and his tail dragged every time a trunk was opened, and he whimpered softly whenever Mr. Thomson left the house without him. He understood that the master was going away.

Mr. Thomson was much affected by Billy's attachment and talked to the dog as consolingly as to the children. When he told him good-by, he bade him protect his family and his home. Billy's eyes promised faithful service. Elisabeth could not say good-by. She fled to the Lewises and hid her head in Aunt Jessie's lap.

Mrs. Thomson and Constance accompanied Mr. Thomson to New York that

they might be with him until he sailed. Elisabeth, Billy, and Betsy went to stay with the Lewises where they were royally entertained. Emily especially did everything she could think of to make the visitors happy and contented.

Billy felt his responsibility deeply as custodian of the white house. He visited it the first thing in the morning, the last thing at night, and many times throughout the day. At night, just before Mr. Lewis was ready to retire, he called the dog, let him out, and waited until he came back and barked for admission.

One evening, a half hour passed and Billy did not return. Mr. Lewis went to investigate. He found Billy on the back porch of the white house and called him to come home. Billy wagged his tail so violently that Mr. Lewis could hear it thump, but Billy remained where he was.

Mr. Lewis found the reason when he flashed his pocket light upon the porch. Billy had interrupted a would-be robber in an attempt to force an entrance through the kitchen window. The man was perched on the high sill in a most uncomfortable position which Billy insisted upon his retaining.

The malefactor on close inspection proved to be little more than a boy, who told so convincing a story of having attempted merely to procure food to satisfy a three day's hunger, that Mr. Lewis decided to let him go. He had considerable trouble to win Billy's consent to the plan. Billy wanted to see the thief carried off in a wagon by the police.

"Some dog," the boy said admiringly. "He tore my sack to pieces and told me it was my turn next."

“Billy doesn’t like sacks, or men who carry them,” Mr. Lewis explained.

“Sorry I didn’t know that. Can you hold him, Mister, till I make my get-away. I sure am obliged to you for letting me go. I won’t come again, any way not as long as you keep that beast.”

With difficulty Mr. Lewis restrained Billy until the escape was effected. When freed, Billy encircled the grounds, barking and growling to such an extent that Elisabeth awakened in alarm. When she heard an account of the adventure, she was pleased that her beloved dog had again proven his worth and was only sorry that the intruder had not been a more dangerous sort. She was allowed to send a telegram to Mr. Thomson to tell him of Billy’s exploit and send her love and good wishes for a safe voyage.

Mr. Thomson sent back a note full of

affection for her and Billy. He promised to write often and bade her be waiting for him with Betsy and Billy on the front veranda when he returned.

Elisabeth was almost sorry when Mrs. Thomson and Constance came back. She had enjoyed every moment of her stay at the Lewises, and she knew she should miss Uncle John in his own home more than anywhere else.

Constance greeted Elisabeth and the animals with enthusiasm. She had to hear the full story of Billy and the burglar, and overwhelmed Billy with praise.

“When your telegram came,” she told Elisabeth, “father was pleased as could be. He said that next to me he thinks you are the nicest little girl in the world and that Billy is worth his weight in gold. Mother said we certainly are under obligations to you both, and that it is extraordinary how

much sense Billy has, and that if ever she could be fond of a dog it would be Billy."

"Now sit down and listen to me," she rattled on. "I'll tell you every single thing we did."

Elisabeth listened attentively until Constance began to talk of Mr. Thomson's departure on the big ship.

"I don't want to hear about that," she said.

"Then you are a queer girl and I don't believe you care for my father after all," Constance concluded.

Mrs. Thomson understood better. "That child has remarkably deep feeling," she said to Mrs. Lewis next day. "She worries like a grown person. Last night, when the wind blew such a gale, I couldn't sleep for wondering what sort of weather John's ship was encountering. I wandered into Constance's room to make sure that she at

least was safe. She was sleeping quietly, but through the open door I heard Elisabeth talking to her dog. She told him Uncle John's ship was very large and strong and that most likely the stars were shining out at sea. I sat down beside her for a while and found it comforting to have a companion to share my vigil."

Many a night afterwards Mrs. Thomson and Elisabeth, brought together by their common anxiety, comforted each other, and in doing so learned to understand and love each other. Elisabeth began to talk to Mrs. Thomson as freely as she had to Uncle John. She soon came to address her as "Aunt Harriet," so close had grown their relationship.

The eagerly awaited cablegram announcing Mr. Thomson's safe arrival came at last and was celebrated with great re-

joicing. Then the family settled down to life without him; and life was so full of interests for the little girls that they found no time to sit and grieve.

CHAPTER X

GEORGE'S REVENGE

BEFORE leaving the city Mr. Thomson had cabled Cousin Anne. He had found little difficulty in tracing her, for although she had spent most of her grown up life abroad, she had always kept in touch with the city she called home. If Elisabeth, directly after the accident, had mentioned the fact that she was related to Miss Anne Lee, several homes would have been opened to her. Had not the accident occurred at a time when the papers gave it little attention because of the absorbing foreign news, some one might have remembered that old Colonel Lee's brother had settled in California many years before, and that

his grandson Sidney Howard, was the cousin and only living relative of Anne Lee. If old Mr. Lipton had not been away from home at the bedside of his sick wife, he would have remembered Sidney Howard as the little boy, son of his best friend, who had spent a year in the city with Anne and her father, before they all went aboard.

At the bank, from which the address of Miss Lee's bank in Paris was obtained, Mr. Thomson was informed that no communication had been received from Miss Lee for the past two months, but that money and mail were still being forwarded to her in Paris.

As yet she had sent no reply to Mr. Thomson's cable.

Constance was glad. "I hope she didn't get the message. I hope that no one will ever take you away from me."

During the next few weeks, however, it seemed as though every one were trying to take Elisabeth away. There came letters, telegrams, and visitors from every part of the country. Some two months ago, the Thomsons heard, Miss Lee had become so uneasy at receiving no word from Elisabeth's father that she wrote to various friends asking for information. These friends had set to work to trace the little family, learning just now of the accident, of Elisabeth's commitment to the Home and subsequent transference to the Thomsons.

A cousin in California who had seen no notice of the accident nor the advertisement in the papers for information in regard to Elisabeth's relatives, had come across by chance in a paper received by a friend, the account of Billy's capture of the automobile thief. The paper showed

Billy's photograph, stated that he was owned by Miss Elisabeth Howard, and gave her address. Although this cousin had not seen Billy, she had received photographs of him taken with Elisabeth. When she compared the pictures in her possession with the one in the paper she was convinced they portrayed the same dog. She could not understand, however, what Elisabeth and Billy were doing among strangers, and she could not imagine where Mr. and Mrs. Howard could be. Mrs. Howard had not been a very regular correspondent, but she had never let more than a month pass without a letter, and Mrs. Harlow had grown worried that she had heard nothing now for four months. She wrote directly to Elisabeth, whom she had not seen for years, asking an explanation. Elisabeth could not remember ever having seen Mrs. Har-

low, but she knew that "Cousin Kate" had sent beautiful gifts at Christmas, and that she had been her mother's best loved relative.

As soon as Cousin Kate learned the truth, she telegraphed that Elisabeth was to be sent to her at once in charge of some responsible person whose expenses she would gladly pay. Meantime, at least a dozen other persons were demanding that Elisabeth be delivered immediately to them.

Until word should be received from Cousin Anne, Mrs. Thomson refused to surrender Elisabeth. Even when a pleasant gentleman from Chicago came at Cousin Kate's request to take the little girl home with him, Mrs. Thomson remained firm. The Chicago gentleman wrote to Mrs. Harlow that she had no cause for worry, since Elisabeth was well

and in a desirable home. Cousin Kate continued to worry nevertheless, and sent a great many nervous letters and telegrams.

Now Constance had come to regard Elisabeth as her own private property, and she deeply resented the attempts to take her away. In a passion of anger she even tried to close the door in the face of an elderly lady who insisted that Elisabeth leave for Ohio with her that very hour.

“You are mine,” she told Elisabeth passionately. “I will not let you go.”

Mrs. Thomson was amused at her own feeling. “Was it only a few weeks ago that I wished some relative would claim Elisabeth?” she said to Mrs. Lewis. “The more who come, the greater my determination to keep the child. I positively dread the answer from Miss Lee, for if she decides to take Elisabeth, we can do nothing.”

The situation bore heavily upon Elisa-

beth herself. She was grateful for the offer of so many homes but much preferred staying where she was. The only offer that appealed to her was Cousin Kate's. Her letters were so full of love and longing that they gave Elisabeth a feeling of homesickness. Moreover, Billy was included in the invitation to come to California.

"I wish Cousin Kate were my guardian instead of Cousin Anne," she said to Mrs. Thomson and Constance. "When I was born, mother wanted to name me Kate, and father wanted to name me Anne. They couldn't agree, so they named me for my mother. Cousin Kate was nice about it, and Cousin Anne wasn't. They don't like each other much, and I know Cousin Anne will not let me go to visit Cousin Kate when she comes home."

"So you think you had better go now,

while you have the opportunity?" Mrs. Thomson asked. "If you really want to go, dear, I will make arrangements to send you, though I'd much rather keep you here until your cousin Anne returns."

"Elisabeth, you shall not leave me. I won't have it," Constance cried in alarm. "You promised father you would stay with me. You won't go, will you? I'll give you anything I have if you'll stay."

"Let's wait a while before we decide," Mrs. Thomson said. "Surely we'll hear from Miss Lee within the next few days."

The waiting was hard for Elisabeth. She was sometimes a bit irritable under the strain. Constance was almost painfully patient, so great was her fear of losing her. Elisabeth had only to express a wish to have it instantly gratified and her occasional outbursts of petulance were re-

ceived by Constance with amazing meekness.

Elisabeth was in no mood to tolerate George's disagreeable tricks. In the past she had ignored them or endured them with such good nature that they had lost their zest for George and been discontinued. Now, he saw that her mood had changed. One day when the little girl was aquiver over a new letter from Cousin Kate and therefore unable to concentrate on her lessons, after she had missed several words in spelling, returned a wrong answer in geography, and been unable to work a problem in arithmetic, George tripped her as she marched down stairs for recess, causing her to fall and bruise her knee. As he stood snickering at her discomfiture, he received a great surprise. Elisabeth struck him.

She was immediately surrounded by

classmates protecting her from George. The teachers learned for the first time of his attacks and he was given so severe a reprimand that he relapsed into sullen silence with an expression on his red smarting face that boded no good to Elisabeth. She was so upset over the blow, which had been as great a surprise to her as to George, that she was allowed to go home. She found Mrs. Lewis with Mrs. Thomson and poured out her story to the two ladies. When she had been soothed and comforted, she was taken gently to task by Mrs. Lewis.

“I am afraid you have undone in a moment of rage the good you had accomplished by weeks of self control. George was beginning to give up his enmity towards you. Soon you could have been friends, and George needs friends. I am sorry you struck him.”

“I am sorry too,” Elisabeth said wearily,

“and I know he'll worry me more than ever. Don't you think it is ever right to lose your temper and fight people, Aunt Jessie?”

“I think one never gains anything by it.”

“George and Cousin Anne are the only two people I ever wanted to fight.”

“Try to think more kindly of them both. Remember they are ‘living creatures,’ little Band of Mercy girl.”

“I will, if you won't scold me any more,” Elisabeth promised.

As far as George was concerned her promise came too late to save her suffering. Deprived by the teachers of any further chance to annoy Elisabeth at school, he nursed his resentment and determined that one day he would obtain a real revenge.

The day came.

One Saturday morning, Elisabeth removed Billy's collar preparatory to washing him and left him for a moment in the front yard. At the same time, the dog-catcher, seldom seen in that neighborhood, stopped at the corner to fill the radiator of his car. George grasped the opportunity. Using his own dog, Jack, as a decoy, he lured Billy to the corner and pointed him out to the officer.

"Say, mister, take up that white dog. He's awful vicious. See, he's ready to spring on my dog."

The man obligingly threw his knotted rope over Billy's unsuspecting head and rendered him powerless.

"He's only a mongrel though he has evidently been well cared for," the man said. "He has no license, so in he goes." He thrust poor Billy into the wire enclosed cage and drove rapidly away.

The transaction had consumed less than five minutes.

George looked about to assure himself that no one had seen. He well knew the execration such an act would bring forth in that district. He tried to exult as he walked back toward the Thomsons, but somehow he did not feel as pleased with himself as he had expected, and started guiltily as he felt Jack's cold nose thrust into his hand. He would feel pretty lonesome if Jack should disappear. His Band of Mercy pledge which he had repeated with great gusto at the meetings came to his mind: I promise to be kind to all living creatures and to try to protect them from cruel usage. No one must know that he had broken the pledge; particularly not Mrs. Lewis who had been so kind to him, nor the detectives who would make him pay dearly for his revenge.

He saw Elisabeth come skipping into the yard calling her dog, cheerily at first, then with a note of anxiety. She opened the gate, which George had carefully closed once Billy was outside, and ran to the corner, calling, whistling, questioning every one she met. George hid behind a tree lest she question him. He watched her turn back and hurry into the house, saw her emerge again with a look of fear. He heard Mrs. Thomson ask:

“Hasn’t he ever gone off by himself?”

And Elisabeth’s answer: “Yes. Sometimes for an hour at a time, but never since I’ve been here.”

He saw her run to the Lewises and despondently return.

At intervals throughout the morning he met her wearily walking the streets, whistling, and calling. He heard her refuse to go into the house to eat, refuse to be com-

forted. In the afternoon, he saw her almost ill with grief, still walking the streets, still calling "Billy, Billy," in a heart-broken tone.

George was even at last. His revenge was complete. He grew tired but try as he would he could not keep away from her.

The entire Band of Mercy had joined the search and no nook or corner in that section of the city was overlooked. Many theories were advanced to explain the mysterious disappearance but Elisabeth rejected them all.

"He isn't lost," she said. "He is either shut up or injured so that he can't walk. He would come to me if he could. I am afraid he is suffering and wondering why I don't come for him, and I don't know where to look. I don't know what to do." Tears streamed down her face. "I wish Uncle John were here."

Constance and Emily were almost as distressed as Elisabeth, and Mrs. Thomson was deeply concerned. She felt no relief that Billy had been taken off her hands at last though she had so many times expressed a desire to be rid of him. The thought of his possible suffering made her wretched, and she felt a deep sympathy for his unhappy little mistress. After telephoning an advertisement to the newspapers offering a reward for his return, she drove about in her car, accompanied by Mrs. Lewis, repeatedly sounding her horn which was well known to Billy.

About half past three, the two ladies had come back from a last fruitless trip and were sitting in the car discussing with the three little girls what to do next. George sauntered up. Mrs. Lewis, never dreaming of the truth, was touched at his

solicitude. She cast him a kindly glance as she said:

“I believe George feels as badly as you do, Elisabeth.”

Elisabeth flashed him a pitiful little smile of appreciation and he turned his head quickly away. He decided that Elisabeth had been punished sufficiently, and since no one else had suggested visiting the pounds, he did so himself. He felt it would be a relief to have the search done with and Billy safe at home.

Elisabeth animated by a new hope thanked him gratefully as she accepted Mrs. Thomson's invitation to enter the car. She asked Constance and Emily to stay at home and welcome Billy in case he should return before she did, and Constance consented at once though she had fully expected to be of the searching party.

“Better go to the Western Pound,”

George said gruffly. "All the dogs are being taken there lately. You had better hurry; it closes at half past four."

"Everybody is good to me to-day," Elisabeth said as the car started, "even George."

It was a long cold drive to the pound which was located in an inaccessible alley in the western part of the city. Elisabeth was in an agony of suspense by the time they arrived.

They picked their way through the unclean alley and entered an old stable, cold, ill-smelling, and desolate, just as the keeper was leaving. To their eager inquiries, he replied that but a single dog inhabited the place that day. Elisabeth flew to the cage he opened. When instead of Billy she saw a yellow puppy, she felt weak and faint from disappointment.

The puppy raised his tiny paws against the wire, crying like a baby to be taken up.

Automatically Elisabeth lifted him in her arms and held him close while tears rolled down her cheeks. The puppy cuddled against her in an ecstasy of joy.

“We can’t leave a baby dog here alone in this awful place,” she said. “Please keep him to-night, Aunt Jessie. I’m most sure we can get him a home.”

To the surprise of the others Mrs. Thomson announced her willingness to receive the puppy into her house and paid the fee demanded by the pound-keeper. She hoped the little dog which had somehow aroused her sympathy would comfort Elisabeth in case Billy never were found.

In answer to Mrs. Lewis’s inquiries, the keeper explained that the dog-catcher had brought in no dogs that day, because his wagon had broken down as he was answering an emergency call in the country: that he had but one dog in the wagon at the

time and it was too vicious to bring in on the street car so that he had been obliged to leave it tied in a farmer's barn over Sunday; that if the ladies thought the dog was theirs they might call again Monday afternoon.

The ladies explained that they could not wait until Monday afternoon and resumed their questioning of the keeper though he showed an inclination to finish with them and go home. They could not discover where the farmer lived but secured the address of the dog-catcher as the pound-keeper ushered them firmly from the stable.

Back in the coupé, Elisabeth pulled the robe close about the little dog. She was not thinking of him, however. Billy occupied her mind to the exclusion of all else, and she begged Mrs. Thomson to hurry to the dog-catcher's house.

"You will be ill, child, if you don't get some rest soon," Mrs. Thomson said, with an anxious look at the little girl. "Don't set your hopes too high, you may be disappointed again."

The dog-catcher proved to be a friendly young man who cheerfully left his supper to answer the questions so eagerly asked him.

"Yes, the dog was white, with tan face and ears symmetrically outlined in black. A fox terrier for the most part. Yes, he had a long tail with a black spot where it joined the body."

Undoubtedly the dog was Billy. Elisabeth trembled with excitement.

"Where did you leave him? Let's go get him quick."

"The trouble is, he isn't where I left him," the man answered, a note of sympathy in his voice. "I just telephoned about

him. He had such a wild look in his eyes that I was sure he was mad—”

“You’d be mad, too,” Elisabeth raged, “if some one should grab you up and carry you away from your home and tie you in a barn.”

“I would that,” the dog-catcher agreed. “But I didn’t know he had a home since he wore no collar and license. He was about to attack a dog twice his size and seemed pretty fierce. He bit the farmer. Not much of a bite but since he broke the skin, I had to keep him for observation. Otherwise I’d shot him to save the trouble of going back for him. I am glad now that I saved him for you.”

“What did you learn over the telephone?” Mrs. Thomson asked as she supported Elisabeth with her arm.

“The farmer said the dog had acted all day like something possessed. He was

sure he was mad and was scared about his hand. About four o'clock he didn't hear him howling and a little later went to the barn to see what had quieted him. The dog wasn't there. He had gnawed through the heavy rope and run off. Mr. Brown looked everywhere for him. He is worried about his bite. I am glad you think the dog didn't have rabies."

"We know he didn't. Where is this farm?"

"Several miles beyond the park. You couldn't make it in your coupé. The road is awful. Besides, the dog has been gone over an hour now and there is no telling where he is."

"Aunt Jessie, could he find his way so far?"

"I am sure of it."

"Won't you drive out and meet him, Aunt Harriet?"

“Dear, we couldn’t see him in the darkness even if we knew the roads he would choose. Let’s go home and wait for him. He will surely come.”

Elisabeth followed Mrs. Thomson slowly to the car which she longed to turn in the direction of the park. She felt sure her eyes could spy Billy in the darkness if they were allowed the chance.

“I have to go home without Billy,” she thought miserably, “but if I were lost, he would never go home without me.”

CHAPTER XI

BILLY'S RETURN

ELISABETH and the puppy were received with the greatest tenderness by Constance and Emily. After hearing the story of the afternoon Emily was for leaving the house at once to find and succor Billy. Constance restrained her by a sensible statement of the facts, and reiterated her belief that Billy would find his way home before morning.

“Now, let me tell you about Betsy,” she went on. “She ran out on the street in front of two automobiles coming in opposite directions. George happened to be near. He clutched her just in time and barely escaped being run over himself. The driver scolded him and Betsy

scratched him, but he held her tight and brought her to me. If it hadn't been for George, you would have lost Betsy as well as Billy."

Elisabeth's face lightened wonderfully as she turned to repeat to Mrs. Lewis what she had just heard.

"I am sorry now, Aunt Jessie, that I hurt George. I shall try to do something for him to make up."

Aunt Jessie smiled approvingly. "How much better to get even with benefits than with injuries! Goodby, telephone us the minute Billy comes."

Preparatory to removing her wraps, Elisabeth placed the puppy on the floor. Mrs. Thomson saw him for the first time in the light and was horrified at his condition.

"He is filthy. Don't touch him, Constance. Call Jennie to wash him. Elisa-

beth, hang your coat on the porch, and go take a bath at once."

Jennie refused to touch the puppy. Mrs. Thomson wouldn't allow the little girls to wash him. Joe was off duty.

"I suppose I shall have to wash him myself," Mrs. Thomson declared. "I won't have anything so dirty in my house, and I suppose he'd freeze out doors on such a cold night. I wish I hadn't been so weak-minded as to bring him home."

"Mother, you wouldn't really wash him, would you?" Constance asked.

Mrs. Thomson looked down at the miserable little object at her feet and replied with asperity: "I never thought I'd descend to bathing a dog, but I dare say I'll live through the experience. Wrap him up in a newspaper, Elisabeth, and carry him to the laundry. Constance, fill the tub while I change my clothes."

"Please let me wash him," Elisabeth pleaded almost in tears over Mrs. Thomson's martyred expression.

"No, you are much too tired. But speaking of 'getting even' with people, I want you to understand that Billy's rescue of my house and car, and your many services are as nothing in comparison to the sacrifice I am now prepared to make."

"You wouldn't know how to get him clean," Elisabeth objected. "He has probably never had a bath in his life. He won't know how to take it, you won't know how to give it, and you'll both have a wretched time."

"There is truth in what you say," Mrs. Thomson admitted. "I remember Betsy's first bath and pause to consider."

Kind old Mandy came to the rescue. She had arranged for Jennie to finish the preparation of dinner while she washed

the puppy. Mrs. Thomson expressed fervent gratitude, while Elisabeth rewarded the old woman with a hug of deep affection. Mandy marched off with the puppy, paying scant heed to Elisabeth's warnings not to get soapy water in his ears lest he be made deaf, nor disinfectant in his eyes.

"You ten' to yore bath. Me an' puppy'll ten' to his'n. He'll holler but doan you bother, dis heah bath ain't gwine to hurt him none."

It didn't, though his wails mounted from basement to attic. When finished, he seemed another dog. His golden hair fluffed and glistened. The ruff beneath his neck was white as snow. His tail was a beautiful plume. He himself was a most attractive little creature with big bright eyes and a tiny button of a nose.

"His name is Bobby," Elisabeth said as she received him from Mandy. "He is a

darling, isn't he? See how he holds one ear up and one ear down."

He felt fine. He raced about the house until he was breathless. He discovered Betsy and made wild dashes toward her, retreating under a chair when she stood her ground. Every few moments he stopped to rest on Elisabeth's lap, thanking her with wet caresses for bringing him to such a lovely warm place. After eating his own supper of bread and milk he strolled across the room to help Betsy finish hers. Betsy put him to flight. The two chased each other madly from room to room.

Elisabeth couldn't help laughing at their antics. Nevertheless, not for a moment could she forget Billy. Every little while she went to the door and called him. At bedtime the Lewises heard her.

"Oh, dear," Emily sighed. "Billy hasn't come yet."

"Do you know, mother," Norman said, "I believe George had something to do with Billy's disappearance. He has been queer all day, and I saw him prowling around just a minute ago though it's cold as Greenland out. I'll make him 'fess up in the morning and if he is responsible I'll trounce him within an inch of his life."

"Indeed you won't," Mrs. Lewis prohibited. "Did you know he saved Betsy this afternoon at the risk of injuring himself? He is worried about Billy and sorry for Elisabeth just as we are."

"Then he has changed mighty suddenly. Anyway I shall investigate him."

Elisabeth undressed so slowly that Mrs. Thomson lost patience and ordered her to bed at once. She had propped open the front gate for Billy, prepared his supper,

and poured fresh water in his drinking pan. Since the cold weather he had been sleeping on the couch in the hall, which was always warm, instead of in Elisabeth's room where the windows were left open. Tonight, however, with Mrs. Thomson's permission, she had placed his chair beside her bed and had ready a blanket to wrap him in. Bobby was so tired that he settled down contentedly on the couch in the hall where a light was left burning against Billy's return.

Mrs. Thomson sat up very late and even after she retired, she listened as intently for Billy's bark as did Elisabeth tossing restlessly on her bed. The little girl dozed from time to time, always waking with a start and sitting bolt upright to listen. Deep in her heart she knew Billy would return, that nothing could keep him from her.

And indeed nothing could. Impeded by the heavy rope about his neck, holding up the paw that had been hit by a passing car, pausing now and again to lick the wound on his back inflicted by the irate farmer, Billy was struggling toward home. Faint from pain, rage, lack of food, he was drawn steadily on by the vision of a little girl with loving, anxious eyes. He came along country roads never travelled by him before into a part of the city wholly unfamiliar. Here and there he made a detour to avoid a pedestrian or another dog, knowing that he had no strength to waste in argument or battle, but he never lost his sense of the right direction.

When he came to well known streets he made an effort to increase his speed. For a little while he trotted, slowly relapsing into a walk as the pain in his paw became intolerable. At last he barely crawled

and breathed with difficulty but he had no thought of giving up.

Almost home! He made a final effort, pulled himself through the gate and up to the verandah steps. He managed one faint bark and dropped exhausted on the threshold.

Elisabeth heard him. Awakened by her glad cry, Mrs. Thomson and Constance followed her down the steps. They saw her gather Billy close in her arms, heard his whimpers of greeting. Without stopping to consider whether or not he was dirty, Mrs. Thomson helped carry him upstairs and examined his injuries. He allowed Elisabeth to bathe his wounds with warm water and alcohol accepting her word that the additional pain was necessary and trying to lick away the tears that fell from her eyes as she felt him shrink and quiver under her treatment. He drank

water feverishly and ate the food she gave him from her hands. He was placed gently in his bed drawn tight against Elisabeth's and cuddled down with his head resting against her arm.

Seeing that he still quivered with pain, Mrs. Thomson decided to administer medicine. "He is so much like a person," she said, "that I believe one of these tablets will give him relief if we can get him to take it."

Elisabeth opened his mouth and put the tablet so far back on his tongue that he was obliged to swallow it. Soon his quivering ceased and he and the household fell fast asleep.

Next morning a veterinarian was summoned. After a careful examination to which Billy submitted intelligently, the doctor assured Elisabeth she had no cause for alarm. He left medicines and direc-

tions and promised that a few days of careful nursing would restore Billy to his usual health and spirits.

The dog could not bear Elisabeth out of his sight, but was very patient when she was with him which was pretty much all the time. For a day or two he could not comfortably walk up and down the steps. The first morning, after Elisabeth and Constance had carried him down, they looked up to see Bobby waiting at the top for his turn.

“You little rascal!” Elisabeth laughed. “Come on down on your own four feet.”

Bobby remained stationary except for his tail. If Billy were carried down, he must be also. He was so cunning in his resistance that a harder heart than Elisabeth’s would have given in to him. She brought him down in her arms and deposited him beside Billy who licked him affec-

tionately, showing no jealousy because he was only a puppy. Betsy hurried to give Billy a loving greeting, rubbing against him with arched back and stretching up her face to meet his. When Bobby thrust his head in between, he received such a slap from Betsy that he ran crying to Elisabeth. He bore no malice, however, and soon engaged Betsy in an exciting game of tag while Billy looked on approvingly.

George came with the others to congratulate Elisabeth upon Billy's return. She greeted him warmly, thanking him again and again for the rescue of Betsy. She wondered why he turned so red and answered her so abruptly. Norman's suspicions were increased by George's manner. He took the culprit home and forced a confession from him.

Norman insisted that an immediate apology be tendered Elisabeth. George re-

fused. Norman threatened expulsion from the Band. George threatened an appeal to Mrs. Lewis and was forthwith dragged into her presence. Having heard the story, she expressed her indignation and disappointment in no uncertain terms.

“I don’t know what you should do,” she concluded. “Elisabeth feels kindly toward you now because of Betsy, and is willing to be friends. If you confess the truth, I am afraid she could not forgive you.”

“No friendship is worth anything that is not based on truth,” Mrs. Thomson said.

“Of course you are right,” Mrs. Lewis admitted. “Go tell your story, George, and make your apology, but don’t expect immediate forgiveness.”

George submitted sullenly. Escorted by Norman, who was determined to see the affair through, he betook himself slowly to

the Thomson's house, where he was received affably by the two little girls.

He stammered out his wretched story, watching the cordiality fade from Elisabeth's face as she realized that George was responsible for Billy's injuries and for all the distress of the preceding day. She sprang toward him with fists clenched in rage. George crouched like a mistreated dog. Elisabeth stopped short. She could no more have struck him than she could have struck a dog. A wave of pity swept over her as she recalled Aunt Jessie's description of his past life. She remembered that he had saved Betsy. He was sorry, he had done what he could to atone.

"I didn't know any one could be so hateful," she said slowly, "and if Billy hadn't come back, I could never forgive you. I'll try to be friends because you saved little Betsy, but'll have to try pretty

hard. I hope you are through now. Anyway you had better leave my dog alone."

Very much embarrassed, George intimated an intention to reform. After an awkward silence Elisabeth said:

"Billy is asleep now and so is Bobby. Constance and I were going to have a game of parchesi. Would you and Norman like to play?"

When Mrs. Lewis stopped by, a few minutes later, prepared to gather up the fragments of George, she was astonished to see him seated happily at the table with the other three, and close beside the sleeping dogs.

That evening she had a long talk with the little girls. They reached a most important decision. Elisabeth expressed it for the rest.

"If some one does you an injury, try to

forget it; if some one does you a kindness, try to get even."

"Elisabeth," Mrs. Lewis asked soberly, "can't you think of some act of kindness performed by your Cousin Anne toward you?"

"No," Elisabeth said positively, "not one."

CHAPTER XII

LETTERS FOR ELISABETH

AT last, after weeks of anxious waiting, word came from Cousin Anne in the form of a cablegram to Mrs. Thomson. It was disappointingly brief: "Letters just read deep gratitude am writing."

"We don't know any more than we did before," Constance said disconsolately.

"Well any way she evidently isn't coming straight home to get me," Elisabeth rejoiced.

Mr. Thomson wrote often. His letters were usually addressed to Mrs. Thomson with messages to the others. Occasionally one came with Constance's or Elisabeth's name on the envelope. Elisabeth spent

several days writing an answer to the first that she received.

“Dear Uncle John:

“Thank you for the letter that was all mine. I loved it and so did Billy. I read it to him over and over and every time he listened and wagged his tail. He misses you very much. He did something so clever I am afraid you won't believe it. Five or six letters came with yours. Billy smelled them all and then brought me yours. He did, truly. Aunt Harriet made him try it again, and still he brought yours. When Billy was lost, I missed you especially, terribly. Billy is well again except his paw hurts when it rains. I wish you could see Bobby. Aunt Harriet had his picture taken with Billy and Betsy and we will send you one. I wish Aunt Harriet and Constance would like Billy as much as they like Bobby. Of course Bobby is the cunningest puppy in the world but he hasn't anything like as much sense as Billy, and he can't love as hard. I have taught him to sit up on his hind legs. He learned in just a few days and now he sits up and begs for everything he wants and he looks so cunning that he gets it. Yesterday, Billy was on the window seat. Bobby tried to make him jump down to play, but

Billy was tired and wouldn't. At last Bobby sat up for him, and we laughed, for Billy couldn't resist him any more than the rest of us and jumped down to play. Bobby and Betsy romp all over the place. But they both love Billy best because he has the sweetest nature of any dog in the world. Bobby loves to be carried about. One day after his bath, Aunt Harriet held him in her lap. I was so surprised. Bobby knows already what 'want to go walking?' means. When anybody asks him that he rushes to find Billy and catches him by the neck to make him run. Then he comes back and waltzes around and around until he gets dizzy. He is cute. He copies everything that Billy does, so he is learning good manners. I will write some more to-morrow.

"This is to-morrow. George is so nice to me now that you wouldn't know him. Aunt Jessie's plan did work. He is kind to all living creatures, except a few boys. Yesterday when the grocery boy threw a stone at a kitten, I didn't get angry at all, I mean on the outside of me. I talked to him so politely that he became interested in the Band of Mercy and promised he would join if Aunt Jessie would let him. He learned the pledge then and there. Aunt Jessie was much pleased with me. I suppose I ought

to tell you that when I saw old Mr. Brown take some baby cats away from their mother and put them out in the alley in the cold, because he didn't want them any more, that I was dreadfully impertinent to him and we had an awful time. He came to see Aunt Harriet and complained of me, and she didn't know what to say because she knew he had no business putting those baby cats in the alley to starve, but she said she did not want trouble with the neighbors and I had no right to be rude. Aunt Jessie said so too, and I promised to let her attend to such things hereafter. She did attend to the kittens when I took them to her, but I had already telephoned the Humane Society and they made Mr. Brown pay a fine for putting the kittens in the alley, and he said I was some kind of a nuisance, and he won't speak to any of us. Aunt Jessie said I should make friends with him as I did with George but I don't know how. Do you mind very much that Mr. Brown won't speak to us? I will write some more to-morrow.

"This is to-morrow. Do you remember Gertrude Harris? She came to a meeting of the Band to-day carrying a young chicken dressed in a red sweater. It looked so funny we couldn't help laughing though Gertrude was almost crying. She has been

raising chickens out of eggs, and this one came without feathers except a few on each wing. Gertrude loved him just the same and was afraid he would take cold this chilly weather. She knitted him a nice warm sweater and put it on him. He strutted out to show himself to the other chickens but they were so scared of him dressed up that way that they made an awful noise and ran from him. Then he was scared and ran so fast that Gertrude had a time catching him. She brought him to the Band for advice. Aunt Jessie couldn't think what to do. Norman got a piece of his old khaki colored sweater and Aunt Jessie sewed it on the chicken instead of the red sweater. We went to Gertrude's back yard to see how the other chickens would take it and we were relieved when they did not make a fuss. From a distance the dressed up chicken looks like the rest. Norman is a clever boy and I like him. Constance and I are doing well at school, though my last month's report was the worst I ever had in my life. Constance and Emily and I are together all the time and we have good times. I am glad you are well and happy. You said you had found out where Cousin Anne is. I hope she will stay there. If you see her, please beg her to let you keep me, for Aunt Harriet

doesn't mind having me now even with my animals. She says she never thought she would live in the house with three. She likes me much better than she did, even if she was cross with me about Mr. Brown, and is always doing so many lovely kindnesses for me that I just can't keep even with her. I send my love to you. Please come home soon.

"From your extra little girl,
"ELISABETH."

A few days later came the expected letter from Cousin Anne. Two letters in fact, one for Mrs. Thomson, one for Elisabeth. Mrs. Thomson read hers aloud. Miss Lee explained her silence by telling of her long and serious illness during which she had been unable to receive mail. She expressed her gratitude to the Thomsons for their care of Elisabeth. She hoped to see Mr. Thomson in the near future. The letter continued:

"I am glad you have found Elisabeth satisfactory as a companion for your daughter. I shall of course repay you for her

expenses and you can understand that I cannot leave her to be a further burden to you. I have written my friend Miss Spence who has a private school to take charge of Elisabeth at once. I have also written to my banker, Mr. Lipton, to make the necessary provision for her support. I shall come home as soon as the physicians will allow me to travel. Meantime I feel sure that the discipline of boarding school will be excellent for her. I am looking forward to meeting you that I may thank you in person for your great kindness to my little relative,

“Cordially yours,
“ANNE LEE.”

When Mrs. Thomson finished, there was a moment of blank silence. Constance recovered first. With flashing eyes and burning cheeks she hurled defiance at this stranger across the sea. Mrs. Thomson was almost as excited and quite as rebellious.

“I told you how it would be,” Elisabeth said quietly. “I shall go to Cousin Kate with my dogs and my cat. Will you telegraph her, Aunt Harriet?”

“No, dear, I’ll send a cablegram to Miss Lee, explaining that instead of being a burden you are a help and comfort, and asking her to let you stay.”

“I hope father will see her soon,” Constance said. “Any way Miss Spence can’t have Elisabeth, can she?”

“Not until we hear further from Miss Lee,” Mrs. Thomson answered. “But you haven’t read you letter, Elisabeth.”

“You read it to me,” Elisabeth begged, handing the unopened envelope to Mrs. Thomson.

“No, dear. Read it yourself, first, and then if you wish, Constance and I will read it too.”

Elisabeth went off to her room but soon returned to offer the letter again to Mrs. Thomson. “Please read it,” she said.

"My Dear Elisabeth,

I did not know until to-day that you were alive. I thought there was no one left in the world who belonged to me. Some two months ago I became so worried at receiving no letters from your father that I wrote to friends in America asking for information and giving the last address I had. My friends finally heard of the accident and cabled me. I was already ill and the shocking news was almost too much for me. For weeks I have been allowed no visitors, papers, or mail. I can't understand why I was not cabled immediately. Surely when you told people that you were related to me, there must have been some one to find my address. I can't understand your remaining in a Children's Home over night. Mr. Lipton was out of the city and no one else would connect your name with mine, but surely as soon as you told who you were people must have offered you the hospitality of their homes. Write and explain the mystery at once. I shall never recover from the ignominy of your having been a burden to others, and the thought of your living on charity is insupportable. I am thankful you were taken in charge by well-bred people and have written to express my appreciation to Mrs. Thomson. I hope you have con-

ducted yourself like a lady and have repaid their care of you with the utmost courtesy, but when I think of the way you were brought up I feel troubled. I have written my friend, Miss Spence, to receive you as a boarding pupil, if possible, in her school. If she has no room for you, I have asked her to secure a proper governess and arrange with Mr. Lipton to open the old house where your grandfather lived when he was a little boy, and where your father lived for a year with me and my father before we came abroad. The house contains everything needful but it has been unoccupied so long that it will require a thorough overhauling. Miss Spence will make arrangements for you and the governess to board somewhere in the meantime, unless as I hope, she can take you in herself. I shall come home as soon as I possibly can and arrange for your future. I shall not write you of my grief at the loss of your father. You are too young to understand. I hope only that you will be worthy of the name you bear. You will write to me at once using the above address.

“Your affectionate cousin,

“ANNE LEE.”

“Affectionate nothing!” Constance exclaimed. “Mother, what shall we do?”

“Stop worrying. I happen to know that Miss Spence’s school is full. I know also that suitable governesses do not grow on bushes and that to open up a long-unused house would require time. Elisabeth will remain here for many a day.”

That same evening Miss Spence telephoned making an appointment to call the following afternoon.

She came promptly at the hour designated. Mrs. Thomson and Elisabeth were the only ones for whom she asked, but Constance, Billy, Bobby, and Betsy assisted at the interview. Miss Spence was tall, handsome, and very dignified. She greeted her hostess and the children graciously but when the animals drew near to make acquaintance, she drew back her skirts with a gesture of distaste. They retreated at once to Elisabeth’s side, Billy growling a little to express his dislike.

"You are evidently fond of animals," said Miss Spence to Elisabeth.

"Yes, Miss Spence, I am."

"That is something I cannot understand, allowing animals in the house, I mean." Constance was about to make a heated reply but Miss Spence dismissed the subject.

She was polite. She thanked Mrs. Thomson for her great kindness to Elisabeth quite as if Elisabeth belonged to her. Mrs. Thomson grew unaccountably angry. Miss Spence regretted intensely that she had no possible room for Elisabeth at present. Elisabeth and Constance almost wept with relief. She would do her best to find a governess, but would dear Mrs. Thomson be willing to keep Elisabeth for a short time longer? Miss Lee was naturally so very particular as to the qualifications of the governess that she could not choose one hurriedly.

Mrs. Thomson expressed her willingness to keep Elisabeth indefinitely. Miss Spence was most appreciative of such kindness and congratulated Elisabeth upon her good fortune in finding such friends. She asked the little girl many questions and was greatly surprised to learn that she and Constance were attending a public school. She hoped that she might have them both for pupils in the near future. She apparently did not notice that no one echoed her wish.

Betsy, attracted by the beads on Miss Spence's skirt, made a sudden dash toward her. Miss Spence turned quite pale and gave the little creature a rather vicious kick with a foot by no means small. It was the first blow Betsy had ever received and she cried pitifully. Billy sprang forward to protect her but was restrained by Elisabeth.

"I never could endure a cat," Miss Spence explained.

"I am sorry you did not say so before," Elisabeth said quietly though her eyes blazed with anger. She soothed Betsy tenderly as she carried her from the room, closely followed by the dogs. She left the three animals with Mandy and returned most reluctantly to the drawing room. Miss Spence rose to go.

"If at any time you find Elisabeth's presence an inconvenience, let me know and I will make other arrangements for her. Miss Lee would repudiate my friendship if I allowed her cousin to impose on you."

"Elisabeth is the greatest help and comfort both to Constance and myself."

"I am afraid her pets—" Miss Spence suggested.

"Billy, the larger dog, saved my electric from being stolen and my house from being

broken into. Bobby and Betsy provide us with much entertainment. I am grateful to them all."

Tears came into Elisabeth's eyes as she pressed close to Mrs. Thomson.

"You must come to see me often, Elisabeth," Miss Spence ordered at parting. "Your cousin is depending on me for full reports. But," she added with a playful smile, "leave your pets behind you."

Every one breathed more freely when the visitor had departed.

"She is so much like Cousin Anne," Elisabeth affirmed, "that you could hardly tell them apart. Do you wonder I feel as I do?"

"No, I don't," Constance declared. "She is the most unpleasantest woman I ever met. Poor little Betsy Cat!"

"That's all very well but a drawing room is no place for animals," Mrs. Thom-

son said severely. "Miss Spence had a right to feel annoyed. Next time we have a guest, Elisabeth, put every animal in the yard. You and Constance seem to forget that animals are not attractive to every one."

Elisabeth promised to comply. "My animals are too precious to be risked with people like Miss Spence," she said.

CHAPTER XIII

"THE DEARWAS"

SCHOOL was closed for almost two weeks on account of an insufficient supply of coal. Most of the boys and girls were at a loss how to fill the empty days. Not so Elisabeth, Constance, and Emily. The three had long since become inseparable and were never dull when together. Constance entertained them with stories which they dramatized. Elisabeth fostered their interest in animals and rescue work. Emily planned adventures which were not the less exciting that they usually ended in disaster.

The three addressed one another as "Dearwa." At first there was no secret connected with the name which was used simply to express affection as they readily

explained. When, however, the detectives, Norman, Dick, and Ralph, for lack of anything else to detect, accused the Dearwas of having a secret society, and vowed to discover its purpose, the girls swore one another to secrecy and announced their determination to keep their mysteries inviolate.

The fact that in reality they possessed no mystery did not prevent their devising an intricate system of signals to protect them from discovery. They went through strange contortions of face and body when they met. They had signs and countersigns. Their meetings were held in various inaccessible places, but usually in the attic behind an enormous old trunk. They played that Cousin Anne, who had assumed the character of an ogress, was endeavoring to capture Elizabeth through her agents, the detectives.

The detectives shadowed them with patience and stealth. They tracked them to their hiding-places. From the roof they spied upon them performing mystic rites behind the trunk. Yet with all their trying they could never take them by surprise. Bobby and Billy, acting as sentinels, gave the alarm no matter how noiselessly the boys approached. The dogs loved the game. They sat in the charmed circle, quivering with eagerness, while the dark conferences were being held. They helped to seek for hidden treasure in the backyard, making the dirt fly with their willing paws. Billy with an air of grave importance carried messages from Dearwa to Dearwa, successfully eluding pursuit.

The game bewildered Mrs. Thomson. She openly expressed her disapproval, claiming that it made her nervous to see

shadowy figures gliding about the house all hours of the day, and that she disliked to find a band of conspirators ready to spring every time she opened the door of a closet.

"Why don't you conspire and detect in Emily's house occasionally?" she demanded.

"Because our house is so big and full of such splendid hiding places," Constance answered. "Please let us be, mother, I never had so much fun in my life before."

Mrs Thomson received no sympathy from Mrs. Lewis, who was delighted that the young people had found so innocent and safe a pastime.

"I nearly lost my mind over them last week," she said, "when Emily had ideas more brilliant than usual. They kidnaped two neglected colored babies in the alley, bathed them, and dressed them in

borrowed clothes. The little things nearly had pneumonia from their unaccustomed ablutions, and the mother threatened us all with arrest. The Children's Protective Association took them in charge and they are getting on nicely now.

"I told you how angry Mr. Perkins and Mrs. Renolds were the night they were almost decapitated by the rope which the Dearwas had left fastened between your yard and mine. It was rather an ingenious arrangement on big spools and provided the children with amusement all day as they sent letters and packages across, but they had no right to leave the rope in place at night. Even that wasn't as bad as stretching the wire between two trees and attempting to walk it. Why they didn't break their necks I'll never know. This new game is a vast improvement, and I shall be content if I can induce the

rest to allow George to play. He will surely get into trouble if left to himself."

"Another!" Mrs. Thomson exclaimed despairingly, "when the house is already overflowing."

George was allowed to become a detective at Mrs. Lewis's insistence, and Mrs. Thomson allowed the game to proceed hoping the boys and girls would soon grow tired of it. Insensibly she and the servants became affected by the atmosphere of mystery and found themselves responding to signals with motions the meaning of which neither they nor any one else understood.

Mandy made a wonderful conspirator and suggested marvelous rites and hoodoos. Whenever the dogs announced the coming of the detectives she let forth a sudden yell which had the desired effect of startling out of their wits Dearwas and Detectives

alike, to say nothing of passers-by. No one could yell like Mandy. No one could listen to her unmoved. The kitchen came to be preferred to the attic as a rendezvous, and poor Mrs. Thomson was much mortified by offers of assistance from strangers who happened to pass the house just as Mandy performed her part.

Many applications were received for admission to the two societies. Elisabeth and Emily would have acted favorably upon all but Constance refused. She rather enjoyed excluding the children who had formerly, though for good cause, excluded her. Moreover she was so happy that she wanted no change. She refused to consider even Esther who was earnestly desired by Emily and who was tearfully anxious to become a Dearwa. Her admittance was advocated by Elisabeth as a means of "getting even" for many past

favours. When Constance steadfastly refused consent, Emily lost her temper. Constance also lost hers.

"We will have her, so there! Two against one decides it."

"We will not. I have a right to choose who is to play at my house."

"I made up the game, so I have a right to choose who is to play it with me. Come on, Elisabeth, we'll let Esther join and if Constance doesn't want to be a Dearwa any longer, she needn't."

"She has to be," Elisabeth answered mildly. "You know we decided, 'once a Dearwa always a Dearwa, forever and ever, Amen.' I feel sorry for Esther because she is lonely without you and I think it would be kindness to a living creature to have her and I think we should get even with her that way, but we can't if Dearwa C. won't consent."

“Of course we couldn’t tell her about Cousin Anne, any way,” Emily conceded, “but her feelings will be hurt.”

“Tell her that if ever we decide to extend our membership, she will be the first person invited,” Constance said, her graciousness restored.

When Esther was informed of Constance’s decision, she was not discouraged, but looked about for a way to make herself desirable. Since secrets were in order, she would find a secret of her own. She did. In a few days she was able to promise a revelation of surpassing interest if allowed to become a Dearwa. Constance could not hold out against such an offer, for the Dearwas were feeling the need of a real mystery to keep up the interest of the detectives. Consequently Esther had her way.

She was considerably disappointed when

she learned that the Dearwas had manufactured a mystery of pretense and that their signals and facial contortions and Mandy's yell had no real meaning. She was slightly consoled when she was required to raise her right hand and promise to be faithful to the Dearwa Band, forever and ever, Amen.

"Now, tell us your mystery," the others clamored, gathering close about her in pleasant anticipation and warning the dogs to be on guard.

In a low tone Esther began: "You know the vacant house next door to me?" The question was purely rhetorical; of course they knew it.

"I found Betsy there," Elisabeth reminded her.

"You know it is different from any other house near here. It is old and the rest are new. Father says it was considered an

old house when he was a little boy. It used to be out in the country until a few years ago when the city grew out this way and our houses were built. It has three times as much ground about it as any other house and it is shut off to itself by the high fence and trees and shrubbery."

"It's a scary sort of place; I love it," said Emily.

"Most anything could happen in an old house like that," Esther went on. "I asked my father who owned it and he said he didn't know. No one has lived in it for years and years, not since any of our houses were built."

"It has been called the 'vacant house' ever since I was born," said Emily.

"That's queer, that no one should live in it, I mean," said Constance.

"It's especially queer," Esther contin-

ued in a significant tone "that it should be vacant now, when people need houses so badly that they are willing to pay anything for them."

"Perhaps it is haunted," Constance conjectured.

"I am sure it is," Esther whispered. "Last night—"

"Yes, go on," urged the Dearwas with a single voice.

"Last night, in the middle of the night I woke up. I don't know why, but I did. I don't usually you know."

"For goodness sake, hurry," Constance said exasperated.

"Well for some reason I woke up, and I looked out the window. The window is near my bed, you know, and faces the back part of the vacant house. In summer, when the leaves are on the trees I can't even see the house, but in winter I

can, as plain as anything. Last night I looked out and I saw—”

“What?” the others demanded breathlessly.

“As plain as anything I saw a light.”

“But the windows are boarded up,” Emily objected.

“Not in the back. The shutters are closed, but they have cracks, and through the cracks I saw the light. It was a weird kind of light and it moved. When I told Daddy about it this morning, he laughed and said I dreamed it, and that Mammy Jane mustn’t tell me any more ghost stories. But I didn’t dream it. I was wide awake. I know there was a light and it moved about.”

The Dearwas were thrilled. “Not a word to the detectives,” Constance warned the rest. “We must throw them off the scent while we go to investigate.”

"I'd like to have them with us," Elisabeth said timidly.

"Oh, no," Emily remonstrated, "it will be such fun to have a real secret for them to find out."

"I tell you what we'll do," Constance planned rapidly. "The boys don't know that we have made Esther a Dearwa. If we take our knitting and go over to her house, they will think we are tired of the game. They will go off by themselves and then we can steal over to the vacant house."

"We can climb the back fence," Emily added. "Come on, Dearwas."

Mrs. Thomson was relieved to learn that the conspirators were about to transfer their operations to other quarters for the afternoon. She was busy and paid little attention to their plans beyond warning them that the weather was cold and they

must be home early. Mandy, on the contrary, was much excited over Esther's story.

"When wuz it you seed dat light, honey, on de stroke ob twelve?"

"I think so," Esther replied. "I am sure it must have been."

"Yes'm, I'se shore too. Jes' den Snowball wuz mighty rambuntious. Lawd, honey, dat cat's fitten to be a Dearwa along wid Billy an' Bobby. He keeps up wid yore-all's carrying-ons. He know'd whut you wuz up to las' night. And dat light now, did it move up an' down, and' back an' fo'th, 'twill it make a cross?"

"I believe so," Esther answered uncertainly. "What do you think it was, Mandy?"

"An, did you see a white han' holdin' on to dat light, a long bluish whitish han'?" Mandy went on in so sepulchral a tone

that delightful shivers ran down the little girl's spines. "Well, don' you all go prowlin' around 'twill I gits you a rabbit foot cotched in de dark ob de moon."

Elisabeth broke the spell. "We wouldn't have a foot cut off of a dear little rabbit," she said indignantly.

However, Mandy's sinister tone had so worked upon the conspirators that each privately resolved to move with caution. In accordance with their plan, they walked out the front gate ostentatiously carrying their knitting bags. As they hoped the detectives turned away in disgust. Arrived in Esther's back yard, the girls left the bags on the porch, and dropped the dogs and themselves over the fence.

They tiptoed noiselessly to the back door of the vacant house. Even the dogs moved cautiously instead of racing ahead as was their custom. The house appeared as

usual with no signs of human occupancy. The Dearwas stealthily tried the various doors and windows within their reach; all were securely fastened. Disappointed they turned their attention to the premises. Nothing unusual was to be seen.

“I believe you did dream it,” Constance said impatiently.

“I did not,” Esther responded indignantly.

“Then Mandy is right and it must have been a spook.”

“That’s silly,” Elisabeth broke in. “You know there isn’t such a thing. If Dearwa really saw a light, some one carried it, but I can’t see how he got in. It’s dreadfully cold, let’s go home.”

“Go home,” Emily repeated in dismay. “Why, we’ve just come. I always have been wild to see the inside of this house

and I am going to to-day if it is possible."

"It is, look there!" Esther pointed triumphantly to a shutter a fraction of an inch ajar. "A tall man could reach and open that without any trouble."

"So could we, with a step-ladder," Emily said, "or even a chair and a box."

"We wouldn't dare," Elisabeth exclaimed.

"Of course we would. Have you an old kitchen chair we can have, Esther? Come on let's see what we can find," and Emily led the way.

A suitable chair and empty soap box were discovered, lifted over the fence, and placed in position against the house in spite of Elisabeth's remonstrances. Esther by right of discovery was the first to mount. She pulled open the shutter.

"The window has been broken and unlocked," she announced. "Now, say I

was dreaming! It looks awfully dark and lonesome inside.”

“Let me see,” chorused the rest, even Elisabeth. Each mounted in turn to the place of vantage and peered into the darkness within.

“Let’s jump inside and search the house,” Emily proposed.

“I couldn’t,” Elisabeth refused with a shudder.

The others laughed at her lack of courage, but when it came to jumping down into the inner obscurity each urged the other to go first.

“Oh, well, I’ll go first,” Emily finally consented, “if you will promise to follow me right away.”

All promised except Elisabeth. “I wouldn’t go into that old dark house for anything,” she said with a shudder. “I’d rather go home than anywhere else.”

"I'd almost rather," Constance admitted. "But go on, Emily, and I'll jump next."

Emily mounted the improvised ladder. "One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, and four to go." She jumped, but not into the house. At the final moment her courage failed. She sprang to the ground and rushed wildly toward the fence, followed by the other Dearwas overcome by panic.

"I heard something," Emily whispered.

"What?" asked the others.

"Something awful, like a moan."

They returned to the window, too much fascinated by real mystery to keep away. This time Elisabeth thrust Billy's head inside. He sniffed eagerly, emitted a low growl, and struggled to spring inside. Elisabeth turned a flushed face to the others.

“He says there is really some one in the house.”

They turned precipitously for a final flight to find themselves confronted by grinning detectives.

“Thought you’d given us the slip, didn’t you? Thought you’d thrown us off the scent.”

Dearwas hushed them, fingers held warningly on lips.

“What is up?” The detectives inquired rather impressed.

“Let’s tell them,” Elisabeth begged.

All were willing. Swearing the boys to secrecy Constance laid bare the situation. Dick and Ralph were for an immediate entrance. George said nothing. Norman advocated caution.

“We may have come upon a den of thieves,” he said, enjoying the sound and effect of his words, “and if we are to make

a capture and escape with our lives we've got to be careful. I think we should leave the shutter the way we found it and go on home. Nobody will go in or come out in broad daylight. As soon as it is dark, we detectives will go on the job. We'll hide in the shrubbery and keep watch. Sister, why don't you spend the night with Esther, and both of you sleep with one eye open? Wouldn't it be great if we could really discover something wrong, report it to the police and help them make a raid? We'd have a right to call ourselves detectives sure enough then."

"Don't forget we discovered everything first," Esther said.

"We won't. It's the detectives and Dearwas together this time. We had better leave now. The criminals mustn't suspect that they are being watched."

They retreated to the other side of the

fence to perfect their plans. A discussion arose as to the advisability of taking some grown person into their confidence.

“Please let’s tell Mrs. Thomson or Mrs. Lewis,” Elisabeth begged. “A real secret isn’t a bit of fun. I kept one once for a long time and I hated it. Besides, if something is wrong, grown people ought to know and attend to it.”

George agreed. He too had kept a secret at one time and had not enjoyed the experience. Moreover, ever since Elisabeth had not prevented his admission to the Detective Band he had felt so grateful that he was glad to take her side in any controversy.

The rest dissented vigorously. Here was the opportunity of a lifetime for a real adventure and they would run no risk of spoiling it. Elisabeth and George were overruled by the rest and persuaded to

wait for a day or two before divulging the secret.

Nature prevented a further investigation that night. A hail storm kept the detectives at home, and healthful slumber overtook the two Dearwas who were supposed to watch throughout the night.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW SIDE TO COUSIN ANNE

NEXT morning before breakfast Constance and Elisabeth telephoned to Esther to learn the result of the vigil. Esther was forced to admit the humiliating truth; neither she nor Emily had awakened during the night.

"Then we know no more to-day than we did yesterday," Constance declared disgustedly. "Well, we'll have a meeting with the detectives this morning and decide what to do next."

"Not this morning," Mrs. Thomson interrupted. "I must take you children down town for the heavy shoes you need."

"Oh, dear," Constance complained, "that's always the way! Here we have a

perfectly good mystery on our hands and—”

“Must stop for shoes on your feet,” Mrs. Thomson finished with a laugh. “Never mind, I am sure the mystery will keep.”

Before they left on the shopping expedition, the Mr. Lipton mentioned in Cousin Anne’s letter telephoned making an appointment to call that same afternoon. He had only that morning returned to the city and found Miss Lee’s letter awaiting him. He expressed an eager desire to see Elisabeth whose grandfather had been his dearest friend.

“I suppose he will want to take you to live with him,” Constance said ill-humoredly, for recently Elisabeth had been receiving many more offers of a home.

“Don’t worry, no one shall have her until her cousin comes to America,” Mrs Thomson assured them both. “It is very strange

that I have had no answer to the cable I sent Miss Lee."

At that moment Billy entered the room with a letter in his mouth. He had received it from the postman and brought it straight to Elisabeth.

"It is for Aunt Harriet, Billy Dog," Elisabeth said. "Take it to her."

Billy refused.

"Isn't that funny? He knows the letter is from Uncle John and so he wants me to have it." Billy wagged his tail affirmatively. "If it were from any one else he would take it to you. Don't you honestly think he is the smartest dog in the world?" Elisabeth handed the letter to Mrs. Thomson as she spoke.

"He certainly is if you interpret his actions accurately," Mrs. Thomson replied absently as she opened the letter. "Miss Lee is ill again," she said after a moment.

“Has been for the past two weeks, so father has been unable to see her. Overwork and grief are given as the cause. Elisabeth, she evidently loved your father very dearly. Perhaps she is really a fine woman, little girl, and you were too young to appreciate her.”

“Is she very ill?” Elisabeth asked.

“Evidently, as it will be another week or so before she may have a visitor. I shall write her at once not to worry about you, and you must write to your Cousin Kate to-day to explain why we haven't heard further from Miss Lee. First, though, telephone Miss Spence.”

Constance made a grimace at the name. “I hope Mr. Lipton won't be anything like her,” she said, “but I am afraid he will be since he chose to-day to call just when we want to be busy with our investigation.”

He came in the afternoon at three

o'clock, and proved to be as unlike Miss Spence as was humanly possible. A kindly faced, white haired old man, remarkably alert for his years, rather shabbily dressed, he made a much more favorable impression. He was deeply moved at the sight of Elisabeth and kissed her tenderly.

With an arm about the little girl he told her of his great love for her grandfather in the years gone by. "He was the finest gentleman I ever knew and the best friend a man ever had. If we had only known," he repeated many times, "that a little granddaughter of his had been left alone, my wife and I would have hurried home from Washington to you. I can't tell you how happy we would have been to have had you with us all these months, and the grief it is to me that I knew nothing of the accident that deprived you of your parents.

My wife is ill just at present, but as soon as she is sufficiently recovered you must come to us and regard our home as your own. No one could be more welcome."

"Please don't take her away from us," Constance cried. "We need her dreadfully."

"I am thankful she has found such friends," he answered with a kindly glance, "and she must do what will make her happiest. I want her to realize, though, that she shall never lack for a home while I am alive."

Elisabeth thanked him, and Constance looked much perturbed. She almost wished he were like Miss Spence as she saw how greatly Elisabeth was attracted toward him. She decided all was lost when he turned to her little companion with the question:

"Haven't you a dog?"

For Elisabeth's face beamed as she answered: "Yes indeed, two, and a cat besides. Would you like to see them?"

"Yes, but let me show you something first." He took a bit of folded paper from his pocketbook and handed it to Elisabeth. It was a newspaper clipping containing Billy's picture and the account of his rescue of Mrs. Thomson's coupé. "I love dogs and am apt to cut out articles describing their cleverness. I did not associate the Billy of this article with any friend of mine until I received Anne's letter this morning. Then I wondered if you could be the Miss Elisabeth Lee Howard to whom the dog belonged."

"I am so glad you like dogs," Elisabeth said fervently. "You will love Billy and Bobby. They and Betsy are shut up in my room because Mrs. Thomson says it isn't polite to have animals around when there

are visitors. You don't seem like a visitor," she added, "but like a member of the family."

"I am glad of that," Mr. Lipton said heartily, "and if Mrs. Thomson doesn't object I'd like to see your pets."

Billy and Bobby who thought their imprisonment must be due to some punishable offense which they had unwittingly committed met Elisabeth at her door with the most apologetic mien. They were delighted when she assured them that they had not been 'bad dogs' and that they were to go to the drawing room to see company. Billy went bounding down the steps before her but Bobby waited to be carried, whimpering, as she picked him up, to express his wounded feelings. Betsy whose conscience was less sensitive followed the rest as happy as usual.

The three made friends with Mr. Lip-

ton at once. Billy gravely offered his paw as a sign of approval. Bobby and Betsy sat contentedly in his lap.

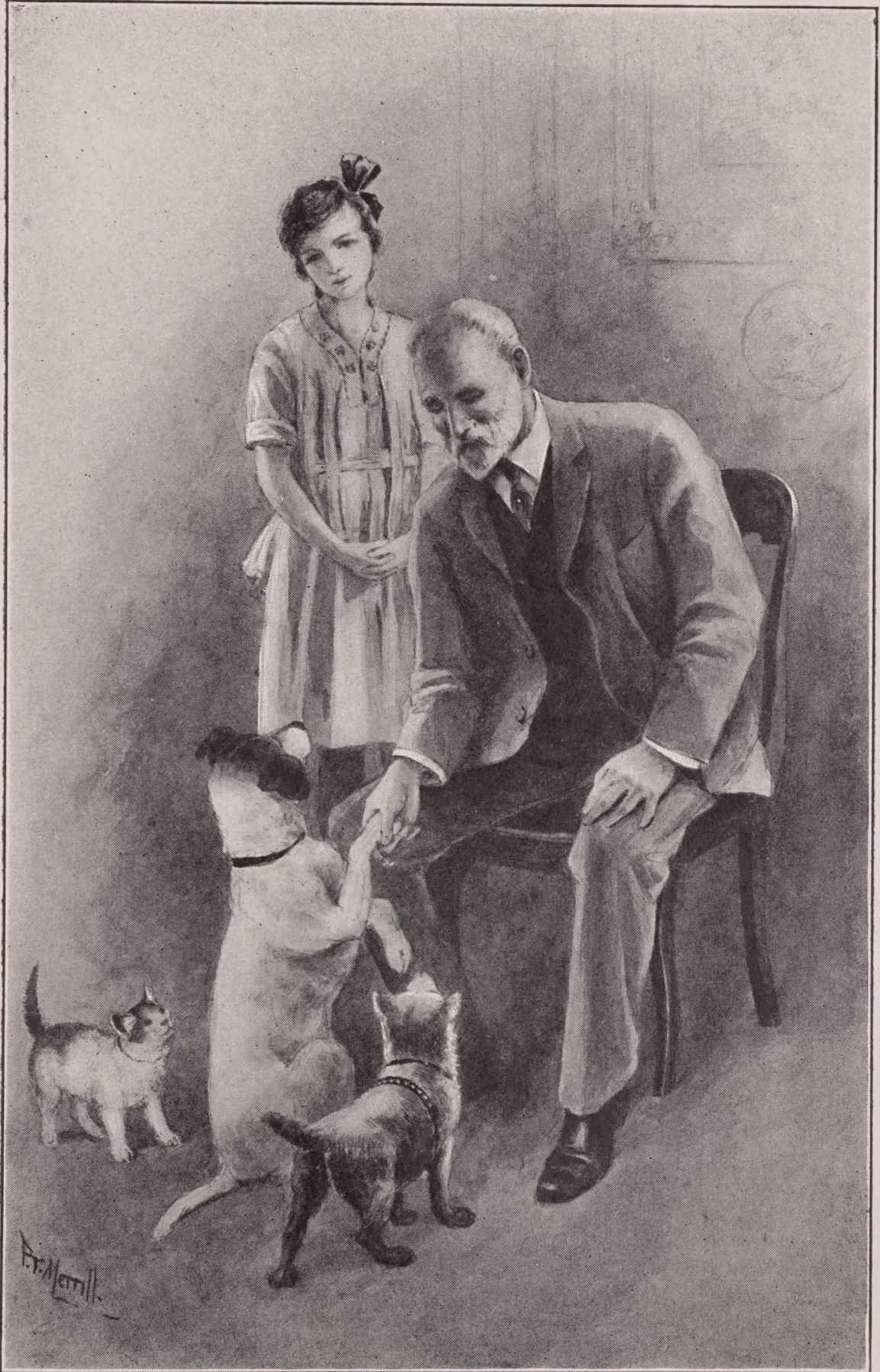
“If ever you come to my house to live,” Mr. Lipton said, “you may be sure there will be room for these friends of yours.”

“We have plenty of room for them here,” Constance assured him.

He made a long call. The little girls soon felt as though they had known him always and talked to him as freely as to each other. He agreed with Mrs. Thomson and Constance that their home was the best place for Elisabeth pending Cousin Anne’s arrival.

“I haven’t been able to decide which house she meant should be opened for you,” he said. “She owns several houses in the city and two in the country.”

“She means the one my grandfather left to me,” Elisabeth informed him. “I don’t



“ BILLY GRAVELY OFFERED HIS PAW ”

know exactly where it is, but I know it is a large, old-fashioned house, not far in the country.”

“I’ll look it up, but I think we shall venture to disregard her order to put you in a big house alone with a governess.”

“Do you know my cousin very well?” Elisabeth asked.

“Very well, indeed. I have had charge of her affairs for many years. She hasn’t lived in Louisville since she was a young girl just out of her teens, but she has come back to see me every few years. She is a fine woman, very conscientious, and will do her best for you.”

“She doesn’t like animals or children,” Elisabeth said. “Did you know that?”

“She will like you, both for your father’s sake and for your own, and she will like your animals because they are yours.”

Elisabeth shook her head doubtfully. "She never has liked me or Billy, and she doesn't think I have been brought up right. I wish she would let me live here, or with you, or Cousin Kate. I am afraid she will send me to boarding school, and I can't go because I can't leave my dogs and cat. Billy would die without me, wouldn't you, Billy Dog?"

Billy came to lay his head in her hand in the comforting way he had, for her tone sounded troubled.

"Dear child, don't worry about the future. Your cousin hasn't come much into contact with little girls and their pets, and just at first you may not understand each other, but you are made of the same stuff, dear, you are descendants of the same splendid men and women, and you are bound to be friends when you come to know each other well."

“I had a kitten and she threw it out of her room and hurt it.”

“She didn’t do such a thing intentionally, that I know. Your cousin may not be fond of animals or of children, but she is not cruel. Did she ever tell you of the time she stood on a frozen street for two hours protecting a horse with an injured foot from abuse by its driver?”

“Did Cousin Anne do that?” Elisabeth asked in utter astonishment.

“She certainly did. She stayed with the horse until the officer of the Humane Society whom she had great difficulty in having summoned came to the rescue.”

“I didn’t know that,” Elisabeth said earnestly. “I wish I could get even with her for it.”

“Get even with her? What do you mean, dear?”

“You see, in our Band of Mercy, when

any one treats you unkindly you try to forget it, but when any one does something nice for you, you try to get even. Of course Cousin Anne didn't help the horse on my account, but I'd like to do something for her anyhow because I told about the cat."

"I see. I can tell you something else she did. A poor little girl she heard about had a crooked back. She paid out hundreds of dollars to have the back straightened so that instead of being a helpless invalid the girl grew into a strong self-supporting woman. She is married now, with children of her own. She named one of them Anne Lee."

He laughed at Elisabeth's expression of bewilderment.

"When Cousin Anne visited us," she said, "she wasn't a bit like the Cousin Anne you are telling me about. She was cross and

hateful and didn't do a kind act for anybody."

"That was just before she went back to France, wasn't it? Well, she was very unhappy then. She had had a terrible disappointment. When you are older, perhaps she will tell you about it."

"She never was nice when she visited us, even before she went to France."

"Then there was some reason for it. Perhaps you weren't nice to her."

"I wasn't."

"You are older now. I haven't the slightest fear that you and she won't get along."

"I have, but I am glad to know about the horse and the child. I am sorry now that she is sick. Did you know that she is so ill she can't see Mr. Thomson for a long time?"

"No," he answered with grave concern.

"I am going to write her a nice letter," Elisabeth went on, "and I shall not say another horrid thing about her. Only I hope she won't come home soon."

"You have read fairy tales in which the princess was so disguised or transformed that no one could recognize her? In some way your Cousin Anne has disguised her real self from you. When she comes home you must take pains to penetrate that disguise, and learn to know her as she really is. Then you will love her and she will love you."

"Aunt Jessie says you can make anybody lovable if you love her enough, and anybody amiable if you are kind and pleasant yourself," Elisabeth said thoughtfully. "George likes me now. Do you really believe Cousin Anne ever could?"

"I am sure of it."

"Aunt Jessie says that if everybody tried

to be kind to all living creatures whether they have two feet or four, that the world would be a happy place.”

“Who is Aunt Jessie?”

“Don’t you know? She is Emily’s mother. Wouldn’t you like to go see her and Emily and Norman and Barry? And Goldie, too? Goldie is their canary. He isn’t a bit afraid of Billy. Billy is kind to all living creatures except burglars, and dogs bigger than he is when I pet them. You can’t be kind to burglars, can you? You have to put them in jail.”

Mr. Lipton laughed. “You can see that the prison is a decent place where the burglars will be reformed,” he said. “Many good men and women have given their lives to the task.”

“There are so many, many things to do in this world, aren’t there?” Elisabeth sighed.

"Yes, but there are many people to do them, so that no one person need be overburdened."

"I shall be a doctor," Elisabeth confided. "I haven't decided yet whether I'll be a people's doctor or a dog's doctor. What are you going to be, Constance?"

"A great writer," Constance returned unhesitatingly, "and tell other people what to do."

"Esther intends to be a great musical composer, only she hates to practice so I don't see how she can be. Emily says she is going to marry and have a great big country place where she can keep all the children and animals and birds that she wants, and she is going to have a huge pasture for poor tired horses that are brought out from the city to rest. Please come now to see Emily and Aunt Jessie, Mr. Lipton."

"Not to-day, little girl. I must get

back home to my sick wife. I shall come soon again if I may, and I shall hope for the pleasure of taking you young ladies to lunch and a matinee."

The young ladies earnestly assured him the pleasure would be theirs. Every one including the dogs and Betsy accompanied him to the door and bade him a reluctant good-by.

"Isn't he a lovely old man?" Elisabeth exclaimed.

"Yes, but you don't want to go live at his house, do you?" Constance asked jealously.

"I'd rather live here with you," Elisabeth answered to Constance's great satisfaction.

Mrs. Thomson wrote a letter to Miss Lee and took it to the little red house to read it to Mrs. Lewis. The two friends had a long talk.

“I don’t want to surrender Elisabeth to any one and I dislike this Miss Lee intensely because she has a right to her,” Mrs. Thomson confessed.

“Would you like to adopt Elisabeth and keep her always?”

“I’d like to keep her for a year or two anyway. It would break Constance’s heart to lose her.”

“Nonsense! You said yourself that she doesn’t need her now that she has learned to be friends with the other children and has so much to occupy her.”

“I should miss her myself. I am not fond of children just because they are children, like you and John. But I really am fond of Elisabeth. I have even become somewhat attached to her animals. I still think a house is no place for a dog and if ever we have one of our own—”

“To think of your considering such a

possibility!" Mrs. Lewis interrupted with a laugh.

"—I shall train it to stay out of doors, but Billy and Bobby are as inoffensive as dogs can be and Betsy doesn't annoy me as much as she did. Elisabeth is really an exceptional child, Jessie. She is a great deal like you except that she isn't so lively and adventuresome. If she could stay with us for a year or two, she might do for Constance what you have done for me, she and Emily together. It makes me downright jealous to think of her in charge of some one else."

"I hate the thought too," Mrs. Lewis admitted, "but perhaps Miss Lee may be able to do more for the child than we can. Anyway she is her nearest relative and legal guardian while we have no claim except our love."

"You know Elisabeth's theory, that chil-

dren and animals belong to those who love them best.”

“Miss Lee may learn to love the child dearly. How can she help it? She may be a good, amiable woman really, and completely misjudged by Elisabeth.”

“I am scarcely the one to criticise her for impatience with children and animals,” Mrs. Thomson said with a laugh, “and after wishing so fervently for a responsible relative for Elisabeth, I am foolish to complain when she appears. Nevertheless, I resent Cousin Anne.”

CHAPTER XV

THE HORRID SECRET

THE following afternoon Dearwas and detectives determined to enter and search the vacant house. Elisabeth said all she could to dissuade them. She reminded Emily of the many times her adventures had ended in trouble. She urged Constance to go home because of the cold and sore throat of which she had complained that morning. She begged the boys to turn the investigation over to the police and not to expose themselves needlessly to danger.

The others scoffed at her warnings, and since she could not prevent the expedition she went along with it so far as the back of the vacant house but positively declined to

enter. Even Norman hesitated when he found the kitchen door unlocked, and all drew back when Dick pushed it open disclosing the darkness within. Elisabeth was urging instant flight when suddenly they heard the cry of a child and the whine of a dog.

Her own dogs leaped forward into the darkness. She followed. The others drew back.

“Dearwa, don’t dare go any further. There is really some one in the house.”

“Elisabeth come back quick. We’ll go for help.”

Billy and Bobby were clawing at the inside door; Elisabeth opened it. The wails of child and dog were distinctly audible from the floor above. The dogs scampered up the dark stairway. Elisabeth followed. The others besought her to return. They heard a man’s voice evidently re-

assuring the child. Norman ordered the rest of his band into the yard and hurried after Elisabeth to force her to descend the stairs. She was already on the top, standing before a door against which the dogs were hurling themselves with excited growls and barks.

The dog inside answered. For a moment there was bedlam. The door was opened a crack and a man's voice demanded what was wanted. Elisabeth thrust Bobby into Norman's arms and held on to Billy. Even so, conversation was almost impossible. The man, coming out of the room in his anxiety, implored that the dogs be silenced for the sake of his sick baby. He carried a candle in one hand, a heavy club in the other, and his relief was manifest when he realized he had only a boy and girl to deal with.

At Elisabeth's suggestion he allowed his

dog, a small black puppy, to come into the hall. All three animals ceased barking in order to sniff one another. The boys and girls left outside now regained sufficient courage to join their two comrades and appeared at the top of the stairs, where they were hushed into silence by the frantic gestures of the man. The baby cried pitifully behind the closed door. Its father commanded the unexpected visitors to leave at once. Norman emboldened by the presence of the others asked an explanation. Elisabeth made inquiries regarding the sick child while she examined the puppy.

“See here,” the man said to Elisabeth, “you like babies and dogs, don’t you?”

“Yes, and we have pledged ourselves to try to protect them from cruel usage. That’s why we are here and if you have kidnapped this baby and dog we’ll rescue them, and if you are cruel to them we’ll

prosecute you." Elisabeth spoke as fearlessly as though she had not been panic-stricken a few moments before.

"Then I'll tell you my story and ask you to help me for the sake of my baby and dog. When we came to the city a few days ago, my wife and baby both came down with the fever. The landlady turned us out of the house on account of the other boarders. The city hospital was crowded and I found if I left them there, the authorities wouldn't let me and the pup stay with the baby, and I knew he'd fret himself sicker without us. I tried to find a furnished cottage and couldn't. Then I thought about this house and came around to see if it was still vacant. When I was a boy, I worked here for a year and I know the place like a book. I broke in and fixed up my old room for my family and we are getting along fine. If you keep quiet, my

wife and baby will soon be well. Then we'll clean up and go away and no harm will be done. Say, won't you go and say nothing for the sake of the baby?"

He opened the door that the children might look into the lamp-lighted room. The baby with flushed cheeks and bright eyes was babbling to the puppy that had returned to the bed. He stretched out his arms to the man crying, "Daddy, Daddy."

The man lifted the little fellow in his arms as he continued: "I have been afraid the pup would bark and give us away, but the baby would fret without him. Besides, I couldn't turn him out on the street to starve."

"Of course not," Elisabeth agreed. "But the baby looks very sick to me. I am sure he should have a doctor."

"I couldn't have one without explaining

matters and getting us turned out. Besides he is lots better.”

“If we could find out who owns the house, we could ask them to let you stay,” Norman said sensibly, “then you could have a doctor.”

“Who owned it when you used to work here?” asked Ralph.

“I don’t remember the last name. There was an old gentleman I called ‘Colonel,’ and a boy a little younger than me named Sidney—”

“Oh,” exclaimed Elisabeth. “Who else was in the family?”

“Just one young lady. The boy always called her ‘Cousin Anne’ but I don’t remember—why what’s the matter?”

He might well inquire. Elisabeth, Constance, and Emily were thrown into such strange paroxysms by his simple statement that the others gazed in astonishment.

"An old gentleman, Sidney, and Cousin Anne," Elisabeth exclaimed.

"Cousin Anne," echoed Constance.

"Cousin Anne," Emily repeated.

"Have you girls lost your minds?" Norman demanded.

The girls looked at one another. "Cousin Anne," they began again.

"Don't stand there saying 'Cousin Anne,'" Esther commanded irritably.

"Tell us quick what it means."

"It means," Elisabeth answered solemnly, "that we need look no further for the owner. This house belongs to me."

She smiled at the baby who was stretching out its tiny arms to her. "You shall stay here until you are quite well and you shall have a doctor to-night."

The man began to plead with her to keep his secret, for he was by no means convinced that she had power to extend hos-

pitality to him. He saw himself in jail and his family abandoned as a result of the children's story to their families. He implored and threatened and promised to move out that very night if the children would keep silent until morning.

Elisabeth tried in vain to reassure him. He ordered the intruders out, warned them that he would not be held responsible if they contracted the fever, closed the door in their faces. They heard him scurrying about as though preparing to leave.

"Let's go leave him alone," Constance said. "I am freezing and my throat hurts. I wish we had never found the man and I hate being bothered with him. It's all Esther's fault. I told you not to make her a Dearwa."

"That's a pleasant thing to say," Esther retorted hotly. "You were more anxious than any one else to know my secret."

"Please don't quarrel," Elisabeth begged. "I am most to blame, I suppose. I knew we shouldn't go into the house alone but when I heard the baby and the puppy cry, I forgot everything but them."

"You marched in as if you weren't a bit afraid," George said.

"Well anyway, come on home now," Constance said. "I am sure I have the fever already, and you will all be down with it by morning. The man and his family aren't our business." She led the way to the yard.

"Of course we'll have to see to them, now we've found them," Emily remonstrated, "but you were right, Dearwa, real secrets are horrid."

"That man mustn't be allowed to move out," Elisabeth said firmly, "and the baby must have a doctor. You detectives stay here while we Dearwas go tell Aunt Har-

riety and telephone Mr. Lipton, and don't let him escape. Constance, if you get the fever, Aunt Harriet'll never forgive me."

As the girls hurried to the front gate, they met Esther's father coming in search of them. He listened to their incoherent story with concern and went to the aid of the boys while Elisabeth, Constance, and Emily hurried on home.

Elisabeth called up Mr. Lipton while Constance and Emily informed Mrs. Thomson of the afternoon's proceedings. The old gentleman confirmed Elisabeth's belief that the vacant house was hers, or would be when she came of age. He promised that he would visit it immediately as her agent and do what was necessary for the welfare of the baby.

"There, everything is all right," she said to Mrs. Thomson and the girls, "and isn't it wonderful that my home is right around

the corner? I won't mind now if Cousin Anne does come home and take me to live with her. I can still go to school with you, and play with you, and study with you every day. I can still belong to the Band of Mercy. I can still be a Dearwa. Once a Dearwa, always a Dearwa, forever and ever, Amen."

"The Dearwas will have to disband this very moment," Mrs. Thomson declared, "unless you three give me your promise that never again will you enter any house without my knowledge and consent. I am trembling yet at the thought of the danger you ran."

"Elisabeth wanted us to tell you," Emily confessed, "but we thought it was such fun to have a secret."

"I was afraid until I heard the baby and the dog," Elisabeth said. "Then I didn't stop to think."

“Will you promise me that hereafter you will stop to think even before you answer a cry of distress, lest you cause more suffering than you relieve? Every one of you may have caught that baby’s illness.”

Constance began to cry. “I have caught it already, I know I have. My throat hurts and my head aches and I feel dreadfully.”

Mrs. Thomson examined her with alarm, for Constance’s face was not red and glowing like the other girls’ but was blue and pinched. She was put to bed at once and the doctor summoned. Emily ran on home and Elisabeth made herself as useful as possible, feeling conscience-stricken as well as anxious, that she had led the way into danger.

Dr. Wilson came straight from the vacant house where he had been summoned by Mr. Lipton. He had found the baby

very ill and meant to return to him as soon as he had examined Constance. He believed the little girl was suffering with nothing more serious than a heavy cold which would soon yield to rest and treatment, and relieved Elisabeth's mind by explaining that Constance could not so quickly have been made ill by exposure to the baby's fever. Nevertheless he scolded both children well for their imprudence of the afternoon.

In answer to Elisabeth's eager questions, he told her that a district nurse had been procured for the baby, and that everything possible was being done for him. The father had sent his thanks to the Dearwas and gratefully accepted the aid of the detectives who had run innumerable errands and brought to the door all needed supplies. Henceforth no young person was to be allowed inside the house. It was for-

tunate, the doctor added, that the case had been reported that day.

Mrs. Thomson sent Elisabeth to bed early and prepared a couch for herself beside Constance. She felt apprehensive in spite of the doctor's reassurance.

Constance passed a restless night and Mrs. Thomson was up a great many times. She was surprised to find herself accompanied by Billy whenever she left the room. He walked beside her to bathroom, linen closet, or kitchen. She was not a timid woman, nevertheless there had been accounts of robberies in the city lately and she found Billy a real comfort as she went about the big silent house. When she lay down, he returned to the couch in the hall. The moment she stirred she found him beside her regarding her with his steady dependable eyes. For the first time Mrs. Thomson realized that Billy was beautiful.

In the morning Constance showed so little improvement that Mrs. Thomson telephoned Dr. Wilson asking him to come at once and bring a nurse.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STORM

TRYING times followed. Constance developed scarlet fever and was a very ill little girl. There was so much illness in the city just then because of the unusually cold weather, lack of coal, and various epidemics, that no nurse was available. Little Barry fell sick; therefore his mother could not help Mrs. Thomson. Joe, the houseman, was compelled to give up his position suddenly in response to a summons from his mother who had met with an accident. Jennie, the maid, forgetful of many favors shown her by the Thomsons, left them in their trouble.

Poor Mrs. Thomson was in despair.

“What shall I do,” she said to Mandy and Elisabeth. “No other servants will come in under the circumstances and there positively isn’t a nurse off duty.”

“Nebber min’, honey, we’s e gwine manage somehow,” Mandy comforted her.

“I’ll help all I can,” Elisabeth promised. “You need me and Billy now, don’t you?”

“I do, indeed,” Mrs. Thomson answered in a troubled tone, “but I feel I must send you away. You might take the fever, yourself.”

“I’ve had it,” Elisabeth said triumphantly. “Really I have, so I may stay and help you, mayn’t I?”

Dr. Wilson was consulted. After questioning Elisabeth closely and being assured that she had indeed had scarlet fever, he consented to her remaining in the house though he barred her from Constance’s bedside.

“But wouldn’t you rather go away, dear?” Mrs. Thomson asked. “Mr Lipton would be delighted to have you, or you could go out to California to your Cousin Kate?”

“Of course I won’t go when you need me,” Elisabeth protested, indignant at the thought.

Mrs. Thomson thanked her a little tearfully. She did not know what she would do without Elisabeth’s help.

Constance grew rapidly worse. The poor overworked doctor in spite of many other serious cases came several times a day. Mrs. Thomson, worn out with worry and nursing, began to look ill herself. Old Mandy with the cooking, housework, and laundrying on her hands, and suffering with the “rhumatiz” was of no assistance in the sick room. Elisabeth was busy from morning till night, answering the

doorbell and telephone, helping Mrs. Thomson one minute, Mandy the next, or running from one to the other with messages. Mrs. Thomson saw to it that the little companion, who was never more worthy of the name, ate regular meals, took her animals walking every day, and went to bed early at night. As a consequence Elisabeth kept in good condition, though she performed a deal of hard work and shared Mrs. Thomson's growing anxiety. The two came very close together as they ministered to Constance and Mrs. Thomson found Elisabeth's sympathy and untiring service a great comfort as well as help.

"As for Billy," she confided to Mrs. Lewis over the telephone, "that dog is uncanny in his intelligence. I couldn't endure the nights without him. He goes with me wherever I must go, unless I ask

him to stay with Constance, carries articles up and down stairs for me, and is always on the spot when I need him. Last night I was so tired and worried I broke down and cried. How Billy knew it, I'll never tell you, but he pushed open the door and came to stand beside me wagging his blessed old tail with all his might. I used to think it was silly to love a dog, but Billy has made me love him. I don't believe there ever was another dog quite like him.

“Most dogs are like him in their faithfulness, but he is more intelligent than many even if he is a ‘common mongrel.’

“Don't remind me that I ever called him that or wanted to send him away,” Mrs. Thomson pleaded. “Dear little Bobby tries to do his bit, too, but he is still too much of a baby to be much help. His

turn will come when Constance is well enough to be amused by his play.”

One day Mandy sent word that she had tried in vain to leave her bed. She was downed by the “rhumatiz” at last. Mrs. Thomson collapsed on the couch. She felt ill herself, utterly helpless, and deserted. Then she felt Elisabeth’s arms about her and saw Billy standing by her side.

“Please don’t cry,” Elisabeth begged, “you still have me.”

Mrs. Thomson held her close unable to answer.

“I can cook quite well,” Elisabeth went on practically. “I am so glad Mandy taught me all those lonesome days.”

“There shouldn’t have been any lonesome days, dear, but I, too, am glad that you can cook. I never so much as made a cup of coffee in my life. Do you suppose

that we can manage? We shall not need much to eat, and we'll let the housework go."

They got on somehow for another day or two. Elisabeth did not have much actual cooking to do. As soon as the Band of Mercy heard of Mandy's illness, the members kept the larder well supplied from their own homes. Elisabeth had only to warm over the viands on the gas stove, make fresh coffee for Mrs. Thomson, and arrange the trays. George could bring no food. He came often to the house, however, seeking an opportunity to be of service in some other way. Several times, Elisabeth asked him to sweep the walks about the house; and the morning after the hard snow he brought Dick and Ralph with him to clear the walks.

Then came a dreadful never-to-be-forgotten night. In the late afternoon Con-

stance became exceedingly restless. Mrs. Thomson, although conscious of a pain in her chest, felt she could not leave her child for a second. As she moved about in a vain effort to make Constance comfortable, she suffered more and more. What would happen, she asked herself worriedly, if she should fall ill. Elisabeth had carried on as bravely as any woman, but she was after all but a little girl, with only a child's strength and judgment. Toward dark a violent storm arose. Mrs. Thomson felt as though the terrific gusts of wind howled and moaned in sympathy with her. Bobby was frightened and had to be carried about in Elisabeth's arms, or else sit closely snuggled up to Billy as he lay at Elisabeth's feet. The doctor delayed his coming. Constance's breathing became more irregular. Mrs. Thomson's pain increased with her alarm. She could eat nothing on

the tray which Elisabeth had prepared with such care.

Elisabeth tried again and again to use the telephone. She could get no response.

“The wind must have torn down the wire,” she concluded. “The doctor has never been so late before. Surely he will come soon.”

Constance became quieter. Mrs. Thomson sent Elisabeth to bed and threw herself on the couch to await the doctor’s coming, too uneasy to close her eyes though she had not slept for many hours.

The storm continued in its violence. Still the doctor did not come. The telephone was useless. Constance’s condition grew alarming. Mrs. Thomson sprang up, intending to go next door to call for help. She fell back dizzily. Billy came to her side and asked as plainly as though he could speak what he should do.

"Wake Elisabeth," Mrs. Thomson gasped.

Billy obeyed instantly. Elisabeth ran to the room in response to his barking at her door. "What do you want me to do?" she asked Mrs. Thomson.

"Are you afraid to go out into the wind and blackness?"

"Not if I take Billy."

"Then wrap up warmly and go at once. Run to Aunt Jessie's. Tell her to get any doctor quick, and come herself if possible. On you and Billy, child, depend our lives this night."

Elisabeth stopped for no questions. She hurried into clothing and outer garments with incredible speed. She had no need to call Billy. He was there beside her ready to go with her to the world's end if need be. She pulled his sweater over his head, and the two groped their way down

the long dark stairway, through the dimly lighted hall to the front door. As Elisabeth opened it, the icy wind sprang at her taking her breath and almost knocking her down. She closed the door with the greatest difficulty.

Billy, shivering with the intense cold, pressed against her. They made their way slowly to the gate, struggling against the roaring monster that resisted their every step. The electric street lights revealed awful swaying shadows. The huge trees edging the sidewalk bent and twisted as though making frantic efforts to reach the two small creatures below them. Both child and dog were frightened as they nearly lost their footing time and time again. To Elisabeth's other fears was added the terror of being too late, for progress was painfully slow.

Suddenly out of the blackness came a

man. He seemed overwhelmingly large and his attitude threatening. Billy growled warningly and Elisabeth shrank against the fence to let him pass. Then she noticed he carried a medicine satchel and all fear left her. She tried to attract his attention. He could not hear her voice for the roaring of the wind. Desperately she seized him about the leg and clung despite the wind's effort to dislodge her.

The man at first, in ignorance of what it was that had fastened itself upon him, tried to shake her off. Then, discovering a little girl, he lifted her in his arms that he might hear what she was endeavoring to tell him.

"Are you a doctor?" Elisabeth screamed in his ear.

"Yes," he answered, "what's the trouble?"



“ ELIZABETH EXPLAINED IN A FEW WORDS ”

Elisabeth explained in a few words. "Go into that house," she directed. "The door is unlocked, and on upstairs to the first room on your right. Bobby will bark at you, so Mrs. Thomson will know you are coming. She will be gladder than anything to see you, for Constance is worse and she is dreadfully sick herself. Tell her I'll come as soon as I can get Aunt Jessie. Please hurry."

"Better come on in and show me the way," he urged. "This is a bad night for a little girl to be out."

"I have to go for Aunt Jessie. Please don't stop. Please go on in. They need you right this minute."

The doctor insisted upon knowing where Aunt Jessie lived, but finding that her house was so near, he released Elisabeth, and promising to follow her directions, set off at a brisk walk. The wind was behind

him and helped him forward. Elisabeth much relieved, continued her slow progress. Only three lawns intervened between the houses, normally a few seconds walk. To-night, Elisabeth and Billy were fifteen minutes in covering the short distance. Elisabeth's fingers were so numb that she could hardly ring the bell. When at last the door was opened she and Billy fairly fell inside.

Mrs. Lewis picked up one, Mr. Lewis the other, and placing them in a warm room massaged them both. In a moment Elisabeth was able to tell her story. Fortunately Barry and Norman were better and just then asleep. Both Mr. and Mrs. Lewis accompanied Elisabeth and Billy home. The return trip was quickly accomplished. Elisabeth was supported by Mr. Lewis's strong arms, and helped instead of hindered by the wind.

They were warmly welcomed by the doctor who was in great need of assistants to help care for two desperately ill patients. There was work for all, but especially for Elisabeth who was the only one knowing just where to find the different articles required.

After an hour or two of work the big doctor turned and shook Elisabeth's hand. "You have saved two lives, to-night, little woman, you and your dog. Now, please go to bed and sleep."

"Don't worry any more," Aunt Jessie added. "I shall send Mr. Lewis home to my invalids and stay here the rest of the night. Aunt Harriet and Constance are much better now."

So Elisabeth went to bed and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Although for several days Mrs. Thomson and Constance continued to be very ill,

the hardest times were over. Dr. Wilson and the big storm-brought doctor came regularly. Two trained nurses, one for day, the other for night duty, were somehow procured. Mandy came back with a young niece to help her. Mrs. Lewis ran in and out a dozen times a day. Elisabeth was thus relieved of responsibility though she still found much to do. As soon as Constance began to be convalescent she demanded the continuous presence of her little companion, and Elisabeth was hard pressed to keep her amused and happy in the bed she was so anxious to leave.

“I’ll never be cross with you again,” Constance declared many times, and always after she had just been cross, “because you stayed with mother and me and saved our lives.”

As soon as Mrs. Thomson also was on the road to recovery, Elisabeth was a

happy little girl. She enjoyed being made much of and praised, and as nothing gave her greater pleasure than to be of service she devoted herself to the two invalids with such heartiness that her attendance was doubly welcome.

After a while Mrs. Thomson and Constance were able to be up and about again. The doctor's visits grew less frequent and the nurses went away. Belinda and Charles had been engaged in place of Jennie and Joe. Mandy was quite recovered. The household was itself once more.

Mr. Lipton reported that the man in Elisabeth's house was ready to move and wanted to see and thank her before he left the city with his wife and baby both of whom were quite well again. An interview was arranged.

The man, his name was Tom Sand, told

Elisabeth he wanted his baby to join a Band of Mercy just as soon as his age permitted, and that he himself intended to try to keep the Band's pledge in return for all the kindness he had received.

Elisabeth asked him a great many questions about her father whom he had known as a little boy just her age.

"He was like you," Mr. Sand told her, "crazy about babies and animals. He was always bringing in some stray creature."

"What did Cousin Anne do? Did she let him keep them?"

"Not in the house, she didn't, but he could do what he liked in the yard and stable. She wouldn't touch any of his animals but she always sent them out food. Sometimes he might forget to feed them but she never did."

Elisabeth's face grew radiant with hope. "And she wasn't cross about them?"

“No,” he answered, “she was never cross with the boy no matter what he did.”

As soon as the Sands were gone, the vacant house was aired and fumigated, and Mr. Lipton promised Elisabeth she should explore it to her heart's content as soon as the weather moderated.

As if to fill her cup of happiness to the brim, Elisabeth was allowed to hear one tiny fragment of a conversation between Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Lewis.

“You asked me once, Jessie if I should like to adopt Elisabeth. I wasn't sure then. I am sure now. I want to adopt her and Billy, Bobby, and Betsy and keep them all my life. I wrote John to see Miss Lee as soon as possible and beg her to give us Elisabeth for our very own.”

CHAPTER XVII

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL

MR. THOMSON had promised to write to Elisabeth as soon as he had seen Miss Lee. One day, on her return from school, Elisabeth found the long-expected letter awaiting her.

“Read it aloud,” Constance ordered.

Elisabeth refused. “Let me read it to myself first, in my own room. Afterwards I’ll bring it to you.”

“Hurry then, I can’t wait to know what they have decided to do with you. Oh, Dearwa, Cousin Anne must give you to us!”

Elisabeth returned after a little while with such a happy expression that it was

evident that the letter contained good news. She read it aloud to Constance and Mrs. Thomson.

“My Extra Dear Little Girl,

“I had almost despaired of seeing your cousin when she sent for me today. She has been critically ill, as you know, but is much improved now. I have just returned from my interview with her and am writing at once as I promised. I was almost afraid to send in my card, for you had led me to expect some one truly terrifying, and when a tall handsome woman with a charming manner swept into the room, I was sure my card had reached the wrong person. But no, she established her identity at once, inquiring for you and expressing gratitude to me. Honey, either you have done the lady a great injustice or she has greatly changed. We had a most agreeable chat. She loved your father dearly and loves you for his sake. Some day she will love you for your own. I think the trouble in the past was due to misunderstanding on both sides, for she has no idea what a dear little girl you really are. As soon as we had become sufficiently acquainted I asked her the truth about the cat which you told me she had

thrown from her room while visiting you. I can understand people who have never come into intimate contact with animals expressing dislike for them, but I can excuse cruelty in no one, and I should never dream of intrusting a child to a woman who had been cruel to a kitten. Miss Lee remembered the occurrence which had distressed her very much. It seems the little creature had crept into a package of soiled linen, and when Miss Lee threw out her laundry she had no idea she was throwing out a cat as well. She would have explained the matter to you, if you had not behaved as though you thought she had hurt the cat on purpose. Now, aren't you sorry!

"Not to keep you in suspense another moment I shall tell you at once her decision in regard to you. I begged her to give you to us for our very own, to let us adopt you and give you our name. She would not consent to that but made several important promises. First, that you may remain with us as long as she stays abroad, and that will be some time, now that she is satisfied that you are being well cared for. Second, that she will not send you to boarding school but will commit you again to our care in case she is ever obliged to leave you. Third, that she will not separate you from Billy, Bobby, and Betsy, though

she says it seems almost wicked to her to waste time, money, and affection on useless animals when so many people are in desperate need. You see, she never stopped to consider that animals have rights as well as people. As soon as Aunt Jessie and the Band of Mercy get hold of her, she will realize that we have a responsibility toward all creatures dependant upon us for their lives. Fourth and last, when she takes you to live with her, she will open the old family residence which strangely enough is just around the corner from us, the old vacant house next door to Esther's home. So you see, dear, you will always be very near. I am keenly disappointed that I may not keep my other little girl always in our home, but I understand and honor Miss Lee's feelings in the matter. I am happy that at least you will always be within reach. You may be sure of this, honey, no one can ever take you out of my heart.

"From your loving
"UNCLE JOHN."

"Isn't it a beautiful letter?" Elisabeth asked, as she finished reading.

"Oh, but I wanted you for my own sister," Constance mourned.

“I can still be your own Dearwa,” Elisabeth consoled her. “Perhaps Cousin Anne has changed. I am glad about the kitten. Perhaps she always was nicer than I thought. I didn’t believe she would let me keep Billy even, and certainly not Bobby and Betsy. Aunt Jessie thinks I can make her like me if I try. I shall try. Isn’t it glorious that I am to live near you always? Turning out to have a house so near is almost as good as turning out to be a relative. I am so happy I could cry. Let’s go read the letter to Emily and Aunt Jessie.”

On the way, Constance remarked thoughtfully: “Mother has a secret and I can’t find out what it is. She looks so happy that I thought perhaps father had written her that we could keep you. Of course it isn’t that. Sometimes she looks troubled and then she begins to smile to herself and won’t tell me why.”

For once Elisabeth was too much absorbed in her own happiness to speculate in regard to another's. "I don't know," she answered carelessly. "Hurry, I can't wait to tell the Lewises that I am to keep my animals and stay in the neighborhood."

At Aunt Jessie's suggestion, Elisabeth began to write regularly to Cousin Anne, giving her the same intimate details of her daily life that she was accustomed to give Uncle John and Cousin Kate. The letters she received in reply gradually took on a warmer tone. It seemed more and more possible to Elisabeth that some day she and her guardian might become friends.

Aunt Jessie encouraged her in the thought. "Kindness begets kindness, and love begets love," she reminded her.

CHAPTER XVIII

ANOTHER MEETING

THE Band of Mercy had its annual meeting early in the spring at the Thomson's home. It was a most interesting and enjoyable affair.

Aunt Jessie had compiled statistics showing the work accomplished since the organization of the club. Sixty two dogs, not including litters of puppies, had been rescued from the streets, most of them in a starving condition. Of these, eight had been returned to grateful owners who had made donations to the Band's treasury, twenty-five had been placed in comfortable homes where they were visited by a committee from time to time, and the rest had been humanely disposed of by a veterinarian at

the expense of the Band. An exact record of the cats collected had been impossible to keep, but Mrs. Lewis stated that no less than one hundred, chiefly kittens, had been handled by the Band. A few had escaped and been lost, but the great majority had either been provided with homes or put to sleep with chloroform that they might be forever relieved of suffering. One hundred and forty drivers of horses in all parts of the city had been asked to allow their horses to stand in the shade in summer instead of in the boiling sun, to discontinue beating their animals, to adjust ill-fitting harness and bits, to remove blinders pressing against the horse's eyes, to blanket their horses in winter, and have them rough shod in slippery weather.

"Several tradesmen have told me," Mrs. Lewis said, "that they wouldn't come into this neighborhood unless they were sure

all was right with their animals, for they couldn't stand to be continually accosted and worried."

Thirty cases of cruelty to animals had been reported to the Humane Society and properly dealt with.

All harmless living creatures in the neighborhood had been protected, including small children, birds, toads, fireflies, butterflies, and chickens which were not allowed to be carried by their feet with their heads hanging down, nor exposed to the weather in outside coops in front of grocery stores. During illnesses in the neighborhood, messages had been carried for those in need, food distributed, front steps and pavements cleaned. Children of ill mothers, and pets of ill children had been cared for.

"I am proud of this report," Aunt Jessie said in conclusion, "and of this I am sure,

you boys and girls who have spent eight months of your lives in relieving suffering will never be willing to inflict it unnecessarily.”

At every meeting each member had reported kind acts performed in the intervening two weeks. A prize had been offered to the boy or girl reporting the greatest number. Mrs. Lewis had kept a careful record. She read the list of names, and lo! George's name led all the rest.

No one was more surprised than George himself. He, like the others, had taken it for granted that Elisabeth would win. To Elisabeth, however, with her intense love of animals and keen sympathy, acts of kindness were so much a matter of course and performed for the most part so unconsciously that she had reported only very unusual events. To George, on the other hand, every kind act and merciful deed had

been a matter of effort and cause for self-congratulation. He had not omitted one from his bi-monthly reports.

Hearty applause followed the announcement. George had redeemed himself, and all were glad that he should receive the five dollars since the money would mean more to him than to any other member of the Band. George was a different boy these days. Even the expression of his face was changed and though he was still pretty ragged he was usually clean.

The committee of which George was chairman brought indictments against several members.

Harold Graham was severely taken to task for having fed his dog chicken bones. The dog had convulsions as a result. Harold urged in defence that he had not known chicken bones were harmful and that the dog had begged for them.

"You should have known," he was told. "The idea of owning a dog without learning how to feed it. Any bones that splinter should not be given dogs no matter how much they beg."

"I'll never do it again," Harold promised meekly, "and we had the doctor for our dog, and gave him medicine and put hot water bottles on him and everything."

Gertrude Harris was held to be cruel to her dog in that she overfed him. She promised to cut down his meals to two a day and to diminish the quantity to suit his needs, so that he would regain his liveliness and lose his eczema.

James Winter was reprimanded for failure to exercise his dog.

"The idea of keeping him shut up in the back yard where he can see nothing that is going on, with nothing to do and no one to play with! It is not enough to give a dog

food, water, and shelter, he must have exercise and companionship to be happy.”

James said that he played with the dog every opportunity he had but that he was extremely busy at present making up work at school. He would, however, procure a second dog to play with the first.

“That will help, but you must spend all the time with him that you can.”

Florence Taylor was found guilty of neglecting her two cats. Twice their water basin had been found empty, and they had been seen several times roaming the streets at night.

“Cats are very thirsty creatures,” she was told. “They need fresh water kept where they can get to it at all times. Moreover, cats should not be allowed out at night. They make noises and disturb people’s rest; and late in the evening and early in the morning they catch drowsy young birds.”

John Milton was informed that he would be deprived of his badge and membership in the Band so long as his dog was kept chained. His excuse that the animal frightened tradesmen and visitors from the house was not accepted. The dog must either be loosed or placed in another home where he would be given his liberty.

“We want to keep him,” John said. “We like him, and he is gentle and affectionate with us. Besides, he protects the house and grounds, so that my baby brother doesn’t need a nurse. Will it do if I fasten his chain to a long wire in such a way that he can run up and down the length of the yard, and if I take him for a long walk every day?”

The compromise was agreed to.

Jimmy Smith was induced to burn his gumbo-shooter, although it was used, so he

said, to shoot at stones and targets and never at birds.

“A Band of Mercy boy has no business with such a thing,” he was told.

The members voted unanimously to keep the Band in existence and new officers were elected. Elisabeth refused the nomination for president.

“I’d be scared to preside,” she said, “especially when we had visitors. I think either Constance or Emily should be president. They know how better than any one else.”

“We should have a boy for president,” several boys contended.

“No, indeed, the girls should have their turn.”

“I nominate Constance,” Emily said. “I’d love to be president myself but mother says that wouldn’t be fair because my own brother has just served, and I agree with

Elisabeth that Constance would know how to preside better than any of the rest of you.”

Constance, to her great delight, was elected, and filled the office to the satisfaction and even admiration of all concerned.

Ralph was made vice-president, Esther secretary, and Elisabeth treasurer.

It was decided to make a strenuous effort to improve the condition of the city pounds during the coming year.

The meeting ended as usual with refreshments and games.

CHAPTER XIX

LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG

FOR two weeks or more Mrs. Thomson acted so queerly that Elisabeth as well as Constance was mystified. She was restless and abstracted, and sometimes cried a little when she thought no one was watching. Then again she would smile happily to herself and refuse the reason. One day she received a telegram, read it, called the little girls, and proceeded to laugh and cry at the same time.

“What is it?” Constance besought her.
“Tell us quick, mother.”

“Father is back in America, landed to-day, will be home the end of the week. My

little girls, I am so happy and thankful. I have needed him so.”

Constance danced about the room singing joyously: “Father is coming home.” She threw her arms about her mother rapturously, then turned to her little companion.

Elisabeth stood perfectly still, her face pale, her eyes full of tears.

“Aren’t you glad?” Constance asked in amazement. “Aren’t you?”

Elisabeth nodded mutely.

“You are a funny girl, and mother is a queer lady, to cry instead of laugh and sing. What day will he be here, mother? Why has he come? What has happened? How long have you known about it? Why didn’t you tell us as soon as you knew?”

“I wanted to spare Elisabeth the worry of knowing he was on the ocean. I knew you couldn’t keep a secret from her, so I

kept it from you both. He expects to reach home Friday or Saturday and this is only Tuesday. How can we wait?"

"Can't we go to New York to meet him?"

"No, he will be in Washington most of the time, and too busy to talk to us until he gets home. To think that he has really landed, that he is safely on this side!"

The next few days dragged interminably. Fortunately, the second telegram announced that Mr. Thomson would arrive on Friday. Another day's wait would have seemed impossible. Billy was quite as excited and restless as the others. Elisabeth had told him the joyful news immediately and had given him an old shoe of Uncle John's to smell. There was no doubt that he understood what was about to happen.

"Aren't you coming to the station with

us?" Constance asked when Friday and train time at last came to pass.

"No," she answered happily. "When Uncle John went away he wrote me a good-by note and in it he said for me and Billy and Betsy to be waiting on the front porch to welcome him home. He didn't mention Bobby, for there was no Bobby then, but he'll expect him just the same."

So Elisabeth waited on the porch, her three animals beside her, to welcome Uncle John. Never since before the tragic accident that had left her a lonely little orphan, had she felt so happy.

At last Uncle John came. Elisabeth felt his arms about her, heard his loving words of greeting. She could only cling to him without a word. Billy sprang forward to meet him, jumped upon him with ardent affection, offered him his paw, kissed his hands, his face, every part of him

that he could reach, and almost knocked him off his feet in his desire to show his love and welcome. Betsy did not remember him at first and retreated to the background to have a good look before she permitted any familiarity. Bobby was puzzled at Billy's behavior toward this strange man. He could not grasp the situation, and when every one including his own big brother Billy, and his mistress who had never neglected him before, left him entirely unnoticed to gather about the stranger, Bobby retired to a corner and wept aloud. Then Elisabeth picked him up and placed him in Uncle John's arms, and when he felt the strong arms about him and looked up into the kind eyes fixed upon his own, and heard himself addressed with tender words, then Bobby understood that this man was no stranger but a friend.

Seated in his great arm chair with a

little girl on each knee, the dogs and cats at his feet, and his wife sitting opposite, her eyes fixed lovingly upon him, Mr. Thomson told the long story of his months abroad. No one ever had a more interested audience. Then, he in his turn, listened to the story of the others. For the first time he heard of Constance's serious illness and held her close in silent thankfulness.

"It was Elisabeth who saved her for us, Elisabeth and Billy," Mrs. Thomson said with a loving look at the little companion and her dog. "I have but one regret, that Miss Lee will not give Elisabeth to us for our own.

"She could not do that and keep her promise to Elisabeth's father, made when Elisabeth was born. But it is good to know that she will never take her far from us. The more I saw of your cousin, little girl, the more I liked her, and the more I

understood why you did not. She is a fine woman but she is not patient. She has an idea that children should be brought up as they are abroad to be neither seen nor heard, and that they are companionable only after they are grown. She will learn to feel differently about many things after she has settled down among us for a while. You will be proud to belong to her, Elisabeth, when I tell you of the wonderful work she has accomplished over seas, and some day when you come to know and appreciate her properly you will love her with all your heart."

"I hope she will like me, some day," Elisabeth answered soberly. "It is nice, isn't it, how everything has turned out? Aunt Harriet and Constance both want to keep me and my animals; and even when Cousin Anne comes back my home will always be near, so that I can still be your

little girl. Now that you have come home safe and sound, I am very happy."

"Do you know why every thing has turned out so happily, dear? It is because you have remembered 'to try to be kind to every living creature.'"

"I have tried, too," Constance said.

"I can tell that is true by looking into your face, little daughter. There is more sweetness in it than ever before."

Elisabeth bent down to pat the dogs, perhaps also to hide the tears that would come into her eyes.

"Until I found Bobby," she said, "I didn't know how much I could love another dog. Of course I can never love him quite as I love Billy. He hasn't been with me ever since I can remember as Billy has. He never knew my father and mother, and he hasn't taken care of me and comforted me like Billy. But I love

Bobby very dearly and I feel that he belongs to me just exactly the way that Billy does. I thought perhaps," she continued shyly, looking up into Mr. Thomson's kind eyes for courage, "that you might feel the same way about having another little girl. I mean, me."

Mr. Thomson kissed her tenderly. "It is exactly so," he said.

THE END

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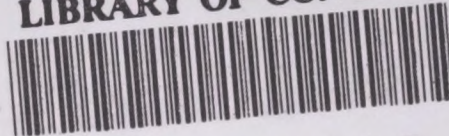
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