

ENID BLYTON'S
TREASURY

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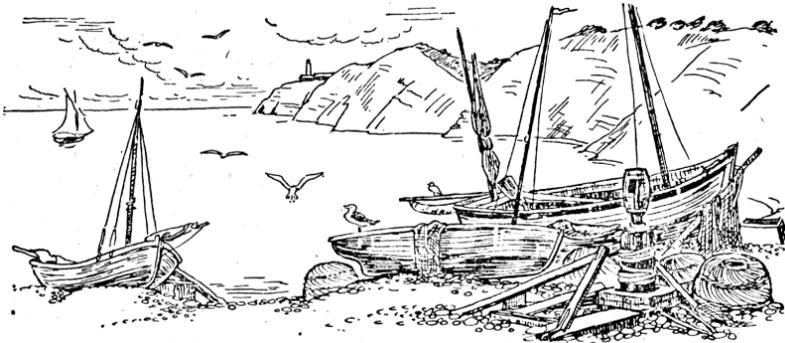
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A MESSAGE—from—ENID BLYTON



Hallo, Children!

What sort of stories do you like me to write for you? You have told me so often that I ought to know by now! And, of course, I do know. So here are plenty of every kind you like best—school stories, circus, holiday, family and adventure! I haven't forgotten those who like detective tales, so please meet Detective John, and see if you could have solved his problems as cleverly as he did.

"What about Nature?" I hear the nature-lovers say. Yes, I've remembered you too, and I hope you'll have some fun reading the nature-quiz stories. Nor have I forgotten those who like to make things, so look out for a rainy afternoon, get out this book, and then enjoy yourself making a roundabout, or a magic box, or even an aquarium.

It was fun writing this book for you. I hope you'll have as much fun reading it!

Best wishes to you all from

Enid Blyton
=

The Secret of Sky-Top Hill



“Where shall we go to-day?” said John. “It’s jolly cold. We’d better go for a sharp walk.”

“Well, let’s show Harry the old ruin,” said Molly. “The one at the bottom of Sky-Top Hill.”

Their cousin Harry looked at Molly. “What a lovely name for a hill! And what’s this old ruin? Let’s go!”

“Come on, then,” said John, pulling on his coat. “Look, you can see Sky-Top Hill from here—that steep hill sticking up into the sky. It’s so wild and steep that nobody ever goes there. The old ruin is near the bottom of it. It was once an inn.”

They set off, walking sharply in the frosty air. It took them nearly an hour to reach the old inn, which was indeed nothing but a ruin now.

“People say that smugglers used to run this inn,” said Molly, climbing over a tumble-down bit of wall. “It’s terribly old—don’t you think it *feels* old?”

It did. All the children thought it had a queer feeling. They wandered about in the ruined building, which had most of its roof off now except for one piece over what had been the big old kitchen.

“Once we played keeping house here,” said Molly. “We even made a fire in that old fire-place, and we kept bread and potted meat in the larder. It was fun!”

“Let’s light a fire to-day and keep ourselves warm!” said Harry. “I’ll go and get some dead twigs and bits of wood.”

But the fire wouldn’t burn. John dragged out the twigs and put his head into the grate, looking up the chimney to see if anything had fallen down to block it.

“Sometimes birds build their nests at the top, and the bits fall down and stop up the chimney,” he said.

“But it’s such an *enormous* old chimney!” said Harry. “Surely no bird’s nest could stop it up!”

“Well—there *is* something blocking it,” said John. “A few bricks have fallen in or something. Wait—I’ll poke my stick up and see if I can move them.”

He poked up his walking-stick. The bricks were lodged very loosely across the chimney, and they fell down into the grate with a clatter and a cloud of dust, making the children jump. When the dust had settled John put his head up again to see if the chimney was clear.

“I say—there’s a big space where those bricks fell from,” he called to the others. “And I believe I can see something there. Got a torch, Harry?”

“Here you are,” said Harry and handed John a small torch. John shone it into the empty space.

“It’s a box!” he said, excitedly. “Hidden up the chimney! Golly, whatever’s in it?”

“Treasure!” said Harry and Molly together. “Quick, get it down and we’ll see!”

John managed to get down the box. It was of some kind of metal, but it felt fairly light. The children put it on the window-sill, and looked at it. It was locked.

“We must smash it open!” said John. “I say—what a find! I bet there’s some kind of secret inside!”

“What shall we smash the box with?” said Harry, red with excitement. “I say, isn’t it old and rusty? Whatever was it hidden up the chimney for?”

“There’s an old broken poker somewhere,” said Molly, looking round. “Yes, there it is. John, smash the box with that.”

Crash! The poker came down on the box. The rusty lock gave way, and the lid hung loose. John opened it.

Inside was a roll of thick yellowed paper. John picked it out of the box and smoothed it flat. There was nothing else in the box at all.

“Just an old paper!” he said in disappointment. The others bent over it.

“It’s a rough kind of map!” said Harry. “Look—there are the points of the compass shown in that corner—north, south, east, and west. And here’s what looks like a road—it seems to fork here and there—but one piece is marked very thick in black ink. That road must lead somewhere.”

“Yes—but what road is it?” asked Molly. “It’s got no name!”

“Here’s something written in this corner,” said John. “It’s very faded. Wait a bit—Y-e-w-t-r-e-e—that’s what it looks like. The road seems to start from there.”

“Yew-tree!” said Molly. “Well, this was called Yew-tree Inn, wasn’t it? But there’s no road at all from here except back to Lanning Village, where we’ve just come from. Why should anyone make a map of that, and hide it?”

“It’s not that road, silly,” said John. “We know it doesn’t wind like this, and fork here and there—and anyway on this map the road shown runs in the opposite direction.”

“It’s queer,” said Harry, looking through the window to the north, where the road or path on the map was supposed to run. “There’s not even a footpath there.”



“Look, you can see Sky-Top Hill from here.”

“I say—there used to be an enormous old tree, a yew, growing at the corner of the inn!” said Molly, suddenly. “It’s gone now—but the stump is still there. It grew out of the corner of the stable. I remember Daddy telling me about it.”

“Let’s go and look,” said John. So out of the old kitchen they went, and into the tumble-down stable. Broken mangers were still on the wall. The floor was cobbled. A great heap of straw lay in one corner, flattened and brown.

“Here’s the stump of the yew,” said John, and he pointed to a rotting stump at one end. “Look, they had to make the wall bend in just here, so as not to spoil the tree.”

The stump was by the old heap of straw. John kicked some of the straw away—and then saw something queer!

“I say! Look! The floor isn’t cobbled here! There’s a wooden trap-door. Do you suppose the road marked on that old map goes underground—a smuggler’s way to somewhere?”

“Heave up the trap-door!” cried Harry. “We’ll soon see!”

The trap-door had an iron handle let into it. John tried to pull it to open the trap-door, but it would not budge.

“I’ve got a rope,” said Harry, who always carried extraordinary things about with him, just in *case* they were needed. He undid a rope from round his waist. He slipped it double through the iron ring. Then the three children together could pull on it.

“Now—heave ho!” yelled Harry, and they pulled hard. The trap-door came up so suddenly that all three of them sat down hard, and lost their breath.

John was up first. He peered down into the space uncovered by the trap-door. “Steps down!” he cried. “Stone steps. I bet this is the entrance to the secret way marked on that map. It runs north on the map, doesn’t it—well, that means we go right into Sky-Top Hill!”

It certainly looked as if it did. The steep rocky slope of Sky-Top Hill rose up directly in front of them, and any underground path must lead into it. How strange!

“Shall we go down?” asked Molly, half-afraid, as she peered down into the darkness. “John, do you think it leads to a smuggler’s hiding-place—caves or something—you know, where smugglers kept their goods?”

“Perhaps,” said John. “Of *course* we’re going down! But if you’re afraid, Molly, don’t come. You’re only a girl, after all.”

“I’m as brave as you, anyway!” said Molly, crossly. “Of course I’m coming.”

One by one they went down the stone steps. It was a good thing Harry had a torch. There were twelve steps and then a tunnel, dark, narrow and low in places.

“This is the way marked on the map all right!” said John, in excitement.

“Shine your torch here, Harry—I want to have a look at the map and make sure I know the right direction. We don’t want to go wandering off into any of the wrong forks.”

“I hope we don’t get lost!” said Molly, suddenly feeling afraid. “Harry, have you got some white chalk? You’ve usually got your pockets full of everything. We could make white crosses on the wall of the tunnel as we go, then if we miss our way we shall be able to find it again by following our chalk marks back to the stable!”

“Jolly good idea!” said Harry, and fished a piece of chalk from his pocket. Then on they went again along the tunnel, Harry marking bold white crosses every now and again.

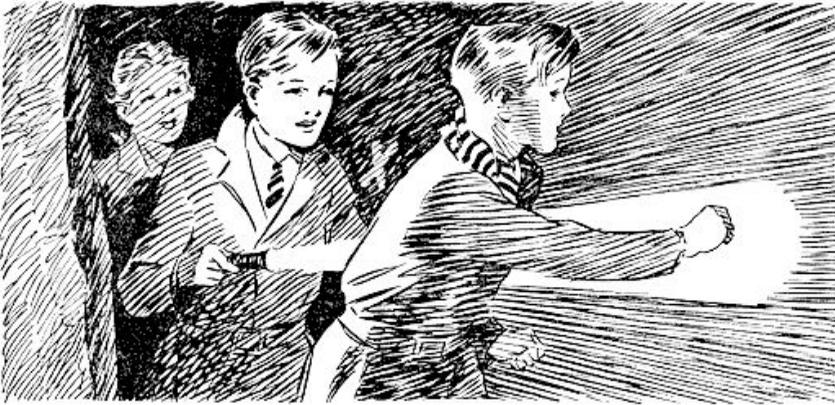
The passage opened out widely after a bit, and here and there other ways ran from it into the hill.



"Heave up the trap-door."

"It's absolutely honeycombed with tunnels!" said John. "Natural ones too—not hacked out by men. This one looks as if it'll lead right to the very heart of the hill! I say—isn't this an adventure!"

The three children groped their way along the passage by the light of Harry's torch. Sometimes the air smelt horrid. Harry kept on marking the wall with his white crosses as he went, and the children were glad to think they would be able to find their way safely back again if they were lost.



Harry kept on marking the wall.

The passage kept more or less level. John stopped and looked at the map whenever they came to a fork, so that he would know which one to take, the one going to the right or to the left.

"We must be getting very deep underground," he said. "The hill must be rising over us very high now. We shall soon come under its top!"

"I bet that's where we shall find something," said Harry, marking another chalk cross. "I bet that's where the old-time smugglers hid their goods!"

"We may find some!" said Molly, excited. "Oh, do come on!"

Suddenly they came into a place that seemed at first to be a great cave—but daylight shone down into it! The children looked round and then up in amazement.

"Why—we're in a sort of deep, deep pit—and that's daylight shining in from the top. There's a hole in the top of Sky-Top Hill, and it drops right down to where we stand!"

They were quite right. There was a queer opening in the top of Sky-Top Hill, a shaft that went right down to the heart of it, ending where the children stood.

And in the caves round about were many queer things! "Boxes!" said Molly. "Crates! Awfully old they look. I'm sure the smugglers hid their things here."

"I say—look here!" said John, suddenly, and he pointed to the ground. "A cigarette end—and an empty cigarette packet! Now who in the world can have left these here?"

It did seem queer to see the cigarette end and packet lying there among all the old-time boxes and crates.

"Who comes here—and why?" said Harry, suddenly dropping his voice to a whisper.

But before the others could answer, they heard something that made them jump violently. They heard a man's whistle—someone whistling a dance tune!

"There's someone coming!" said John, in a low tone. "Look—from out of that cave over there. Hide, quick! We'll watch what he does!"

The children crouched behind a big empty crate in the darkness of an overhanging rock. They waited, their hearts beating loudly.

A man came into sight. A broad young fellow, kicking a stone in front of him as if he were bored. He sat down on a box.

The children didn't make a sound. Somehow they felt that the man wouldn't be at all pleased to know that they were there. They were afraid.

"He can't be up to any good," thought John. "We'd better try and find out what he's doing here!"

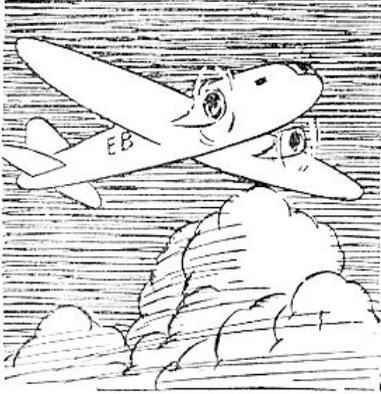
The children crouched silently behind the big box, keeping their eyes on the man. After a while he left his place and climbed a little way up the side of the pit, where a great rock made a kind of shelf.

Here he tinkered about with something, for the children could hear metallic sounds. There was evidently some kind of machinery up there.

"Molly! Harry! I think that man's a spy or something!" said John, in a whisper. "If I get a chance I'm going up on to that ledge to see what he's got there. I can't imagine what it is. If I get caught you must both go back down the secret passage and tell about this, and get help. See?"

"Oh John—don't," said Molly, scared. "Don't climb up to that ledge."

“Sh!” said John, as the man climbed down again. He disappeared into a cave. “Now’s my chance!” said John, and darted out from his hiding-place. He climbed quickly to the ledge and stared in surprise. A strange kind of lantern or lamp was there, its face tilted upwards to the sky far above.



“What’s it for?” wondered John—and then he heard a warning whistle from Harry. The man was coming again. John tried to scramble down.

But he was too late! The man saw him, made a dart at him and caught him. He shook him so fiercely that poor John thought his teeth would fall out.

“What are you doing here? You’ll be sorry for yourself soon!” said the man, and flung John into a small cave. He fixed a great crate in front of it. “You’ll see what happens to nasty little boys who spy around! Have you done anything to that lamp up there?”

The man climbed up to see. Harry ran to free John but there was no time. “Go for help, idiot!” said John. “Quick, before he sees you.”

The others fled into the secret passage without being seen. How glad they were to think that they had the white chalk marks to follow!

John was left behind. The day went slowly by. He was hungry and thirsty but the man gave him nothing to eat or drink.

And then at night, when it was quite dark, a strange and powerful glow gradually filled the shaft, coming into the cave where John was a prisoner. And, at the same time, there came the drone of an aeroplane engine overhead!

“That glow is from the lamp on the ledge half-way down the pit!” said John, to himself, filled with excitement. “It can only be seen by anyone flying directly overhead. It’s a signal of some sort—a signal to the enemy! What a jolly clever idea—yes, that man is signalling with the lamp—the light keeps going on and off!”

The aeroplane droned overhead for a little while, and then made off. The queer red glow died away.

Darkness came again, and poor John trembled in his queer prison. If only the others would come.

What had happened to the other two? They had hurried away down the dark secret passage by the light of Harry’s torch. Harry held the torch and Molly followed close at his heels.

And then they suddenly lost their way! They took the wrong fork, and when they tried to make their way back, they found they were lost. “I thought we were following your chalk-marks on the wall!” said Molly, almost in tears. “How did we miss the way?”

Both children were frightened. They sat down to have a rest and to work out which way to go. At last they set out again, and after a long time, to their great delight they came across Harry’s chalk crosses on the wall!

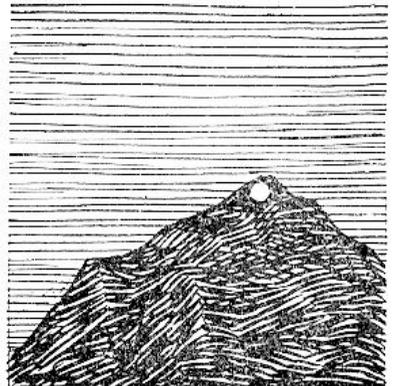
“Now for goodness sake don’t let’s lose them again!” said Molly. “It’s getting so late—and I’m simply terribly hungry! It will be dark before we get home!”

It was almost dark when the two children staggered in at the garden door, and Molly called loudly for her mother. Very soon she had told her the extraordinary happenings of the day.

“I’ll ring up the police,” said Mrs. Johnson, who was astonished and worried. “This is serious. We must certainly rescue poor John!”

Soon the police came in a big car, and off they all went to the old ruined inn. “We had better get to the pit by way of the underground passage,” said the Inspector. “Something funny is going on inside Sky-Top Hill!”

They all crept as silently as possible down the secret passage. When they came to the part that opened into the pit, they stopped in wonder—for a strange red glow lay all round. It was the glow cast by the powerful lamp hidden inside the hill. Its light shone up, and could be seen by the aeroplane which was even then droning overhead—but nothing could be seen of the glowing lamp by any watcher out in the countryside!



“A very clever idea!” said the Inspector, under his breath. “A fine way of signalling messages to the enemy! We’ve often wondered how it was done. Well, you children have done a splendid job of work for us to-day!”

Then the Inspector and his men took charge of affairs, and things began to happen! The men by the lamp were captured. Other men, hidden in comfortable caves, were routed out and taken prisoner. A wireless was found that could receive and take messages, and these had been flashed to the aeroplane that came twice a week to drone exactly above Sky-Top Hill. It was a very clever idea.

“Nice little nest of spies!” said the Inspector, grimly. “Well, well—that aeroplane will have a bad time over here next time it comes! Come along, children—you’ve had enough excitement for one day!”

“What an exciting adventure!” said John, happily, as he got into bed that night. “I do wish someone would write and tell other children about it. I’m sure they’d like to hear about it!”

So I’ve written it for you, and I hope you did like to hear the Secret of Sky-Top Hill!

The Mystery of Melling Cottage



“Your Uncle Thomas is coming to stay for a day or two,” Mrs. Hollins said to John. “He’s an Inspector, you know, in the police force, and a very clever man.”

“Goodness!” said John. “Will he tell me stories of how he catches burglars and thieves?”

“I daresay he will, if you ask him,” said his mother. “And you mind you behave yourself when he comes! He thinks that young boys ought to be taught how to behave when they’re small—then, he says, they wouldn’t get into trouble when they’re older, and appear in the courts.”

John grinned at his mother. He wasn’t a bad boy, and he knew his mother was proud of him. “Well, I’ll try not to burgle anybody’s house or steal anybody’s chickens, Mother!” he said, “at any rate while Uncle Thomas is here!”

Uncle Thomas arrived. He was not in uniform because he was on holiday and John felt rather disappointed. He had hoped to see a very grand-looking policeman in Inspector’s uniform. But Uncle Thomas was in a tweed suit and except that he was very big and had a very clever face with a pair of sharp eyes, he looked quite ordinary.

He liked John at once. “Now there’s a smart boy for you,” he said to John’s mother, when the boy was out of the room. “Asks me sensible questions, listens quietly to my answers, and takes it all in. And when I took him out for a walk this morning he noticed quite as much as I did.”

“I’m glad,” said Mrs. Hollins. “He’s a good boy too, honest and straight. I’m lucky!”

John heard a lot of his uncle’s tales. How this thief was caught, and that one—how a burglar was traced and the stolen goods found—how bad boys are dealt with and punished.

“We learn to use our eyes, our ears, yes, and even our noses, in the police force!” said his uncle. “You would be surprised if you knew how many times a very small thing has led to the capture of rogues.”

John made up his mind to use his ears, eyes, and even his nose too in future, just in *case* he might happen on something interesting. But although he kept a sharp look-out as he went about, he couldn’t really seem to find anything suspicious or queer that needed looking into.

“John dear, take this bundle of old clothes along to Mrs. Browning, will you,” said his mother, two days later. “She’s a poor old thing and lives all alone in Melling Cottage. You know where that is.”

“Yes, I know,” said John, and put down his book. “I’ll go now.” He took the bundle of clothes and set off to Melling Cottage. He knew where it was, at the end of a little lane.

On the way he met old Mrs. Browning herself. She was a little bent woman, with a pale worried face. She had a basket in one hand, and her purse in the other. She was so thin that John felt sure she didn’t eat enough.

“Oh, Mrs. Browning, good morning,” said John. “I was just going to your cottage with these clothes from my mother. Will there be anyone there?”

“No, no, there won’t,” said Mrs. Browning. “It is empty, and I’ve locked the door. I’ll take the clothes with me now, thank you, Master John, and carry them back home when I’ve done the shopping.”

“Oh no, they’re heavy,” said John. “Haven’t you got a shed or anything I can just pop the bundle into, till you come back? I could run along to your cottage, put the clothes in the shed, and you’d find them there when you get back.”

Mrs. Browning hesitated. “Well, yes, there is an old shed,” she said. “It’s halfway down the garden. You could slip down there, open the door and put in the bundle, Master John. Thank you very much.”

John said goodbye and went off with the bundle. He came to the deserted lane where Melling Cottage stood. He went down it and saw the little cottage, a tiny wreath of smoke coming from its chimney.

He pushed open the rickety gate and went along the side of the house into the garden. Yes, there was the shed, halfway down. He went to it, opened the wooden door and looked inside. It seemed to be full of rubbish, a broken chair or two, a few pots, a spade, and some firewood. John put the bundle of old clothes down on a broken chair and then made his way up the garden again, towards the cottage.

Growing beside the wall was a very tall foxglove. A bumble-
bee crawled into one, and John stood still to watch it. And then, as he was standing there, he heard a sudden noise from inside the cottage.

It was the sound of people talking! It started up quite suddenly and made him jump. Who was in the cottage? Mrs. Browning had distinctly said that it was empty and locked up. Then who was there?

The voices went on. Then suddenly they stopped and a band began to play, loudly at first, and then softly. “What an idiot I am!” said John to himself. “It’s not people. It’s only the wireless.”

He was about to go on, when a sudden thought struck him. Surely the wireless had started up quite suddenly—it hadn’t been on when he first stopped to look at the bumble-bee in the foxglove. And then the programme had been switched to another one—well, then there must be someone in the house playing about with it!

It was very puzzling. John wondered what to do. He decided to go and knock at the door and see if anyone came. So he went round to the little front door and knocked hard. He waited, but nobody came. There was not a sound from the cottage except the wireless, which was still playing music.

John left the cottage, still feeling very puzzled. He met little Mrs. Browning hurrying home from her shopping. She stopped and spoke to him.

“Did you find the shed all right? Thank you, Master John, you’re kind.”

“Oh, Mrs. Browning, I hope there isn’t anyone in your cottage,” said John, anxiously, “because when I was coming back from the shed, I suddenly heard the wireless being started up.”

Mrs. Browning looked startled. Then she smiled. “Oh, I left it on when I went out for my bit of shopping. I’m that careless! No wonder it gave you a start, Master John. I’m always doing that.”

“Oh,” said John, thinking that he must have been mistaken. “Well, that explains it, then!”

He walked back home. But on the way he remembered that he had distinctly heard two programmes, one after the other, as if the wireless had first been on one, and then had been switched to another.

He thought about it. “Perhaps though, it *was* just one programme,” he said to himself. “I might have heard the end of one talky-talky bit, and then the beginning of the next which was music. It could easily have been one programme. And anyway, Mrs. Browning seemed quite certain she had left it going.”

All the same there was a little nagging doubt going on at the back of his mind. It *did* seem as if the wireless had suddenly been put on—else why hadn’t he heard it when he first went down the garden? He decided to look at the *Radio Times*, and see what programmes were on at that particular time.



He took the bundle of clothes . . .



He pushed open the rickety gate.

“It was about ten past eleven when I was there,” thought John, looking at his watch. He looked up the programmes. On one there was a talk, lasting from eleven o’clock to a quarter to twelve. On another there was a musical half-hour of dance-band playing.

“Well, then, I *did* hear a bit of *two* programmes,” said John to himself. “It’s jolly queer. I wonder if I ought to find out a little more? I wouldn’t like Mrs. Browning to find a burglar waiting for her in her cottage!”



John went along to Melling Cottage again.

So that afternoon John went along to Melling Cottage again. The smoke was still coming from the chimney. The wireless was silent now. There seemed to be no one about at all.



It was little Mrs. Browning looking quite scared.

Feeling a little bit uncomfortable John knocked at the door. He heard a sudden scraping noise from inside, and then silence. Somebody was there, no doubt about it. He knocked again. He heard another little noise, this time from upstairs. Then he heard footsteps coming to the door. He held his breath, wondering who was going to open it.

And, after all, it was little Mrs. Browning, looking quite scared! "Oh, Master John, it's you!" she said, relieved. "Not many people come along here, and I couldn't think who it was. You must excuse my being so long in answering, but I was in the middle of my cooking."

"That's all right," said John. "I—er—I just came to see if you'd found the clothes all right in the shed."

"Oh yes, thank you," said Mrs. Browning. "Won't you come in?"

"Well, I don't think I will," said John, feeling rather foolish. "Goodbye, Mrs. Browning."

He went away, still feeling foolish. All the same, he was feeling puzzled too. Why had he heard a noise downstairs when he had first knocked, and a noise upstairs when he had knocked a second time?

"I'm making a to-do about nothing!" he thought at last. "Absolutely nothing. I'll forget about it."

But that night, in bed, he began to worry about it again. He felt sure something was not quite right at Melling Cottage. Mrs. Browning did look very white and worried and frightened. She had gone very thin, too. Was there anything the matter?

All at once John threw off the bedclothes, dressed himself quickly, put on his gym shoes and slipped quietly downstairs and out of the back door. He was soon making his way to Melling Cottage. It was about eleven o'clock, and dark, for there was no moon at all.

Down the little lane went John, and came to Melling Cottage. It stood there, a small dark mass by the side of the lane. There was no light in it at all, and no sound from it.

"I'm an idiot," thought John to himself. "What did I expect to find? *I* don't know! There isn't a thing to be seen or heard. I expect old Mrs. Browning is in bed and fast asleep. Well, I'll just creep quietly round the cottage once and then go back to bed. I'm really being very silly."

He walked quietly along the side of the cottage, and then round to the back. There was still nothing to be seen or heard in the black night. John walked softly over the grass at the back of the cottage.

And then he stopped suddenly. He hadn't seen anything, or heard anything—but what was this he *smelt*?

He stood and sniffed quietly. Somebody quite nearby—sitting at the cottage window perhaps—was smoking a very strong pipe-tobacco. John knew it well, because old Taffy the gardener smoked the same, and John had smelt it time and time again when he had sat with Taffy in the shed during the old man's dinner-hour.

And now he could smell that same tobacco being smoked again! It was quite certain it could not be Mrs. Browning. It was some man, sitting there quietly in the dark, smoking by himself.



But that night in bed . . .



The Inspector roused himself at once

It was all very queer and puzzling. Did Mrs. Browning *know* there was a man in her house? She had said she was all alone, a little bent old woman living by herself. Perhaps she didn't know there was a stranger there?

John sniffed the tobacco smoke once more and then turned to go home very quietly. He let himself in at his back door and wondered what to do. Should he go to Uncle Thomas and wake him and tell him? Or would Uncle think he was silly?

"I'd better wake him," said John. "Better to be thought silly than to leave an old woman in danger. That man might rob her!"

So he woke up his uncle. The Inspector roused himself at once, and sat up, alert and wide-awake. He listened to John's queer little tale.

"You did quite right to come and tell me, John," he said. "We'll investigate in the morning. There's something queer in Melling Cottage, no doubt about that. Sharp work, John!"

"But oughtn't we to do something to-night?" asked John. "Suppose that man should rob Mrs. Browning or hurt her?"

"I don't somehow think we need worry about that," said Uncle Thomas. "Get back to bed. We'll tackle it in the morning."

The next day Uncle Thomas went along to see the local police and make a few enquiries. Then he called back for John. "Come along with us," he said. "Then you'll see what the mystery was."

Two policemen were with him. Awed and a little scared John went along to Melling Cottage with them and his uncle. They knocked loudly at the door. Mrs. Browning opened it. She gave a scream when she saw the policemen.

"Oh! What do you want?"



John stayed outside with his uncle

"Madam, I'm sorry—but we have reason to believe that you are hiding your son, who is a deserter from the army," said one of the policemen, "I have a search warrant here. I must search your house."

They went in. John stayed outside with his uncle, looking scared. Presently the two policemen came out again—and this time they had a great lout with them, sullen and brutal-looking. Behind came Mrs. Browning, weeping bitterly.

“He had got a hiding-place under the boards of the bedroom floor, sir,” said one of the policemen to Uncle Thomas. “He’s frightened his poor old mother terribly—made her hide him—and as far as I can make out she’s been giving him all her food and half-starving herself.”

“I told him to go back,” wept Mrs. Browning. “I begged him to give himself up. But he’s never done as I told him, never. I was too scared to say anything. I knew he’d be found sooner or later. I wanted him to go back and give himself up.”

“Oh, shut up, Ma,” said the sullen youth. He was led off between the two policemen. The Inspector stayed to comfort the poor old woman a little, and John looked at her miserably. How awful to have a son like that!

Mrs. Browning saw him. She patted his arm. “You be a good son to your mother,” she said. “Don’t you turn out like my boy. He’s been cruel and unkind to me ever since he was so high. I spoilt him, and this is my reward! Oh, Inspector, sir, I didn’t mean to do wrong, hiding him like that but I was right down scared of him and what he might do to me.”

“Now, now, don’t you worry any more,” said the Inspector. “You did what you could. You get somebody to come and stay with you for a few days, and you’ll soon feel better.”

He and John walked home. Uncle Thomas was pleased with his nephew. “How old are you, John—just gone twelve? Well, I’m proud of you. Good smart work, that. The police have been looking for that young man for some time and have even searched the cottage once before. But he must have heard they were coming and hid in the woods till the coast was clear again.”

“Uncle, I did what you said,” said John. “I tried to use my eyes, ears *and* nose!”

“You did very well, Detective John!” said Uncle Thomas. “I shall expect to hear of more cases you have solved in the future!”

(Turn to page [117](#) and read of another one.)



(See if you can recognise the pictures in the Nature Quizzes. You will find the answers on page [213](#))

Jack and Alice lived in Hazel Cottage, and next door were Joan and Richard. They were great friends and loved going out together.

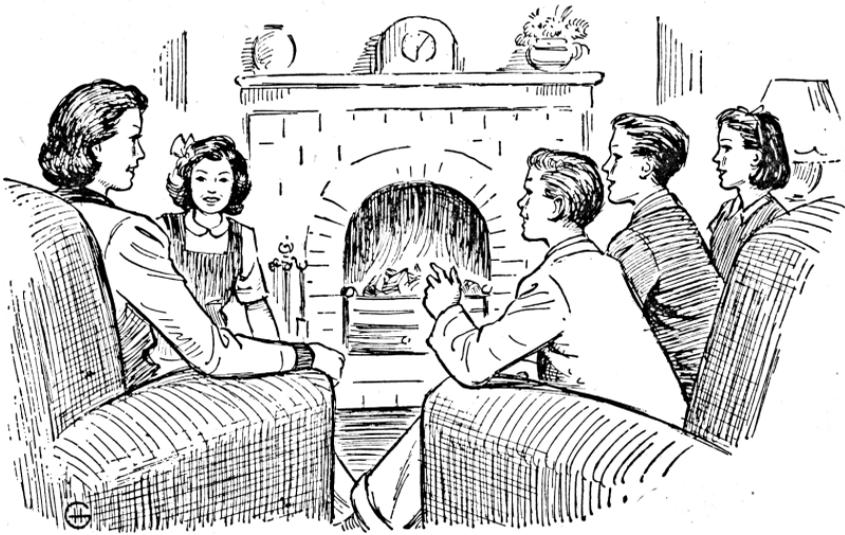
Now it was winter-time, and each family had put up a bird-table. Jack's mother said that that was the quickest way to get to know all the common garden birds. "Until you know at least twelve you can't call yourselves bird-lovers," she said. "Because if you don't know twelve or so you haven't loved the birds enough to see which one is which."

"All right, Mother—we'll be bird-watchers from now on!" said Jack. "And if we don't soon know our twelve commonest winter birds, the ones that come to our bird-tables, you can take down the tables!"

"Right!" said Mother. "I'll give you a quiz in a month's time. So you'll have to do quite a spot of bird-watching if you're going to get top marks."

The four bird-watchers glued their faces to the window pane to see which birds came to the table and exactly what they were like. Robins, sparrows, tits, starlings, thrushes . . . which were which, what did they say, and how did they behave? "I think I know all the birds now," said Richard, at last. "Let's get your mother to give us that quiz. And, by the way, I've got a small quiz for your mother too, Jack!"

"Good," said Jack, and went to find his mother. "Tell the others to come in to tea this afternoon and I'll give you your quiz," she said. So, after tea, when they were all sitting round expectantly, Mother gave them her quiz. (See if you can get top marks too!)



Mother gave them her quiz.

"Now," said Mother, "I'm thinking of a little brown bird. He . . ."

"Sparrow!" said Jack at once.

"Wait," said Mother. "I'm thinking of a little brown bird, with a thin beak like a robin's, who has a quaint little habit of shuffling his wings, and he calls peep-peep and has a cheery little song . . ."

"Hedge-sparrow!" shouted Joan and Richard together.

"Right," said Mother. "Now I'm thinking of a bigger bird, also brownish in colour, and he wears dark-brown freckles on his breast, and . . ."

"Thrush!" yelled everyone, at the mention of freckles.

"Gracious! You'll be guessing the answers before I've asked you the questions soon," said Mother. "Now—let me see—I'm thinking of a rather noisy bird, who has no real song, but makes all kinds of peculiar whistles and gurgles and splutters. He's about the size of a thrush, but has a short tail, and he wears feathers of all colours—purple, green, violet, blue . . ."

"It's the starling!" said Alice, suddenly.

"Right!" said Mother. "Now, I'm thinking of a tiny bird, very pretty, with a bright blue head, white cheeks and a dark line through his eyes and round his neck. He has green and yellow feathers, too, and he is a marvellous . . ."

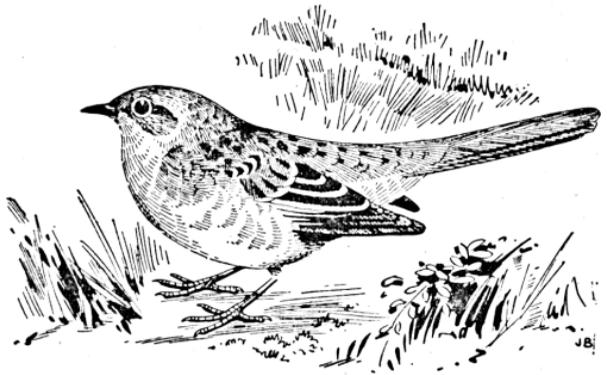
"Acrobat!" yelled Richard. "It's the blue-tit. I know him well, because he comes to our bird-table and swings upside down on the string of nuts. He keeps saying 'pim-im-im-im-im.'"

"You're too clever," said Mother. "Well, this time I'm thinking of a little friendly bird, with a beautiful red breast, and . . ."

"Robin!" shouted everyone, and Mother didn't even finish what she was saying!

"You'll deafen me!" she said. "I'd better give you a difficult one. Now—I'm thinking of a neat little bird, dressed in black and white, with a long tail that . . ."

"Magpie!" said Joan, but the others looked at her scornfully.





"Magpies don't come to the bird-table! And Mother said a little bird, not a big one."

Mother went on. "He has a long tail that keeps wagging up and down, and he runs quickly over . . ."

"Pied Wagtail!" said everyone together.

"Of course!" said Mother. "I was surprised at your magpie, Joan!"

"Yes, that was silly," said Joan. "Go on please!"

"This time I'm thinking of another little bird who has an extraordinarily loud song," said Mother. "To see him creeping about the undergrowth you would think him to be a little red-brown mouse. He has a funny little cocked-up stump of a tail . . ."

"Wren, wren, wren!" shouted Jack, and he was right.

"Well, I must say you're really very good," said Mother. "Now, what about this one—I see a neat, handsome little bird, who calls 'Pink-pink!' loudly, and has a merry rattle of a song, too. He wears a bright chestnut-pink breast, and when he flies you see white bars flashing on his wings . . ."

There was a silence. "The great-tit says pink-pink but he hasn't a pink breast," said Richard. "Let me see—oh, I know, I know—the chaffinch, of course!"

"Of course!" said Mother. "Now, a little noisy brown bird we see everywhere, and hear calling 'chirrup-chirrup' and . . ."

"House-sparrow!" cried everyone. "That's easy!"

"And now, a bird wearing a glossy black dress, with a bright golden beak, whose song is . . ."

"Very, very beautiful!" chimed in everyone.

"Blackbird, of course. You can't beat us!"

"Two more and the quiz is ended," said Mother. "I'm thinking of a little bird, about the size of a sparrow—oh, a



handsome fellow in a glossy black waistcoat, with a black head and collar, a grey tail, yellow breast and beautiful green back. He loves nuts and fat. He calls 'Pee-ter, pee-ter, pee-ter-pee' or 'pink-pink' and . . ."

"Great-tit, great-tit!" cried Joan and Alice together. "He's an acrobat too, like the blue-tit."

"Quite right," said Mother. "And now just one more—a bird which doesn't come to your bird-table, but sometimes comes down on the lawn in the early morning. He's a big bird, brown, with a little crest of feathers he





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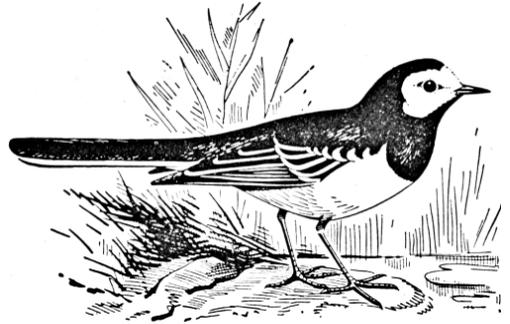
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dear—they simply must guess the last one.

“A bit more description, please,” said Richard.

“Usually,” went on Mother, “he is only a tiny speck high in the sky, and it's his song we know better than the bird himself . . .”

“Sky-lark!” cried everyone. “Of course! Well, we've guessed them all!”



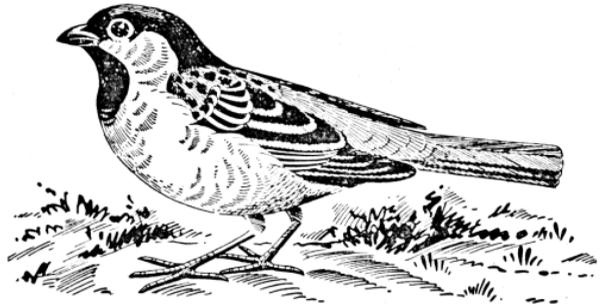
“Very good indeed,” said Mother. “I'll give you a quiz about twelve other common birds when the springtime comes, and some of our migrants are back. I'm glad to see you know a round dozen of the garden ones already. Go to the top of the class!”

“Mrs. Robins,” said Richard, solemnly, “I've got just a small quiz for *you*. I'm thinking of a bird. It's small, very small. It has a red back . . .”

“A red *back*?” said everyone, puzzled.

“Yes, a red back, with black spots,” went on Richard, “and six legs, and . . .”

“Don't be silly, Richard. What is it?” said Joan.



“A *ladybird!*” said Richard, and everyone fell on him at once.
“Now, now,” said Mother, “let the poor fellow breathe. Well, look out for the next quiz, and see how much you know!”

(You'll find it on page [50](#).)





BLUE TIT

SKYLARK

CHAFFINCH

PIED WAGTAIL

WREN

GREAT TIT

ROBIN

HEDGE SPARROW

HOUSE SPARROW

SONG THRUSH

STARLING

BLACKBIRD



SWALLOW

SWIFT

HOUSE-MARTIN

NIGHTINGALE

CUCKOO

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

KINGFISHER

YELLOW HAMMER

TAWNY OWL

EMANSSELL

PHEASANT

WILLOW WARBLER

ROOK



No. 1. MISS HANNAH'S WINDMILL

It was a horrid windy, rainy afternoon. The three children looked gloomily out of the window.

"No good going out to play," said twelve-year-old Jack.

"We've already been for a walk and it was horrid," said ten-year-old Jane.

"I want to do something exciting," said eight-year-old Lucy.

"There's nothing exciting to do," said Jane. "And don't ask us to play snakes and ladders with you, because we don't want to. Or snap, or beggar-my-neighbour. Silly baby games."

"Let's go and ask Mother to come and play with us," said Jack. So they went downstairs and found their mother. She was very busy. Miss Hannah, who had once been her governess, was with her. She was staying for some time to help in the house.

"Mother, come and play with us," said Lucy.

"Oh, my dears, I can't possibly," said Mother. "I've got about twenty letters to write. Surely you can play by yourselves?"

"Shall I go and do something with them?" said Miss Hannah. "I'd like to."

The three children looked at Miss Hannah doubtfully. She seemed rather old to them. They didn't think she would be able to do anything exciting at all.

Miss Hannah smiled at them. She had a nice smile, and though it put even more wrinkles into her face it made her look younger and very cheerful.

"Well, Miss Hannah—if it wouldn't be bothering you too much," said Mother, "I'd be very glad if you would go to the playroom with them and see if you can think of something for them to do."

"Come along then," said Miss Hannah, and went upstairs with the children. "Now," she said, "shall we make something? I'm very good at making things."

"What sort of things?" asked Jack.

"Anything! I don't mind what it is!" said Miss Hannah, surprisingly. "You just say what you want and I'll show you how to make it."

"No—you make something for us," said Lucy, who wasn't very good with her hands.

"Good gracious—it's much more fun to make things yourselves," said Miss Hannah. "Now quick—tell me what you want to make?"

Jack was standing by the window. He looked out and saw a child running down the street. She held a windmill in her hand—a gaily-coloured paper windmill set on a stick, that whirled round and round in the wind as

she ran.

"I know—let's make windmills!" he said. "Lucy would like that—you like those windmills that blow round and round, don't you, Lucy?"

"Oh yes," said Lucy. "Miss Hannah, can you make windmills?"

"Easily," said Miss Hannah. "Now—let me see—what shall we want? We shall want nice stiff paper—crayons—and drawing-pins—and some sticks."

"I'll get the sticks," said Jack. "I know where there are some—in the garden shed. I'll pop on my Wellingtons and mac and go and get them."

"And I'll get the stiff paper," said Jane. "We've got some in our desks. Lucy, get the crayons, and find some drawing-pins."

Soon all the things were ready on the table. "Now, we've only got a little while before tea-time," said Miss Hannah. "So you must all pay attention carefully." She gave them each a sheet of the stiff paper.

"It's just about the right size," she said. "About twelve inches square. Now, is everybody ready? Fold your paper into sixteen squares then."

"Oh dear—how?" asked Lucy.

"Baby!" said Jack. "Like this. First you fold your paper into half. Then you fold it in half again. See?"

"Yes," said Lucy, and copied Jack. Jane was doing the same.

"Now fold it in half, and then in half again the other way round," said Jack. "See? Now open the paper and you've got sixteen squares. (See Fig. 1.) What next, Miss Hannah?"

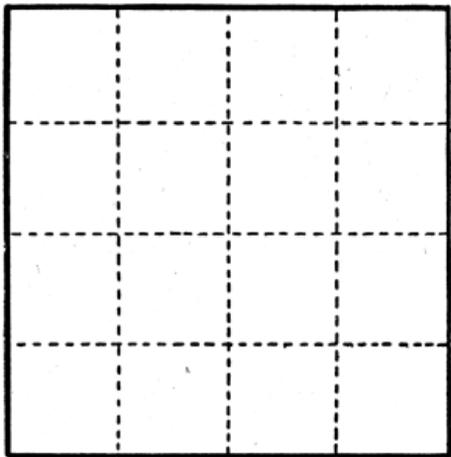


Fig. 1.

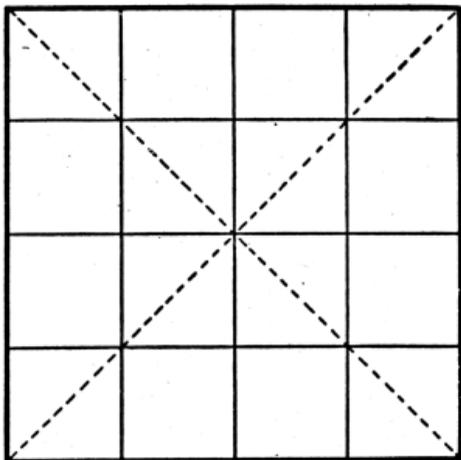


Fig. 2.

"Now make a diagonal fold across from corner to corner," said Miss Hannah. "And another one from the other corners. That's right. Now—open the paper again." (See Fig. 2.)

They all opened their paper squares and looked at Miss Hannah. What next?

"Fold down the top row of squares," said Miss Hannah. They all did that. "Now fold over your right hand row of squares," she said, and they did that too.

"Now comes the only tricky bit," said Miss Hannah. "I want you to pull out the top square to a point, and flatten it—like this, look—that's the first point of our windmill."

It was a bit tricky pulling out the point, but you can see how it was done in Fig. 3.

"Now turn your paper round and pull out another point in the same way," said Miss Hannah, "first folding over the side squares, of course. That's right. Now do the third point—and now the fourth. Flatten all the points down well."

Jack managed easily. Jane found it easy after the first one, but Lucy made a muddle. Miss Hannah had to help her. "This is the way to pull out the points," she said. "Just pull them up like this—and flatten them down."

"My word—it makes a very good windmill," said Jack. "And quite simple too. I often wondered how those men who sold the windmills made them. Now I know. I suppose all we have to do now is to colour them and pin

them on to the sticks with the drawing-pins."

"Quite right!" said Miss Hannah. "Make them as bright a colour as possible."

Jack and Jane used their paints and painted the arms bright red, blue and yellow. Lucy coloured hers with crayons. Then they each pinned the gay windmills on to the sticks.

"Let's put on our coats and Wellingtons and rush round the garden in the wind with them," said Jane, who wanted to see if hers really worked. "There's just time. Thank you awfully, Miss Hannah."

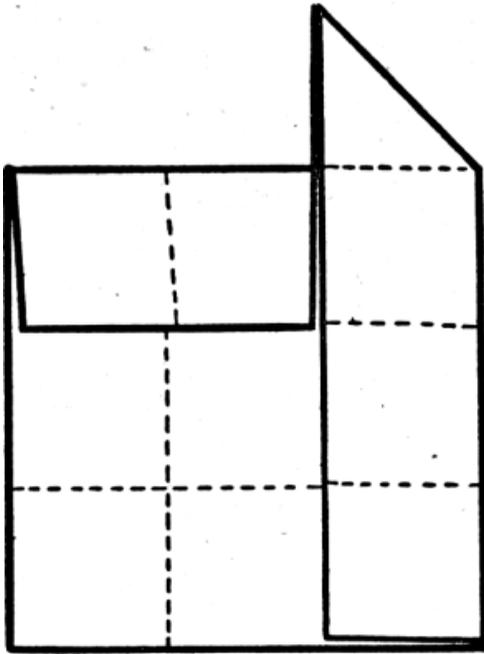
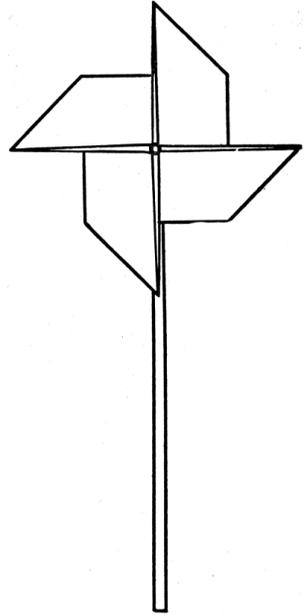


Fig. 3.



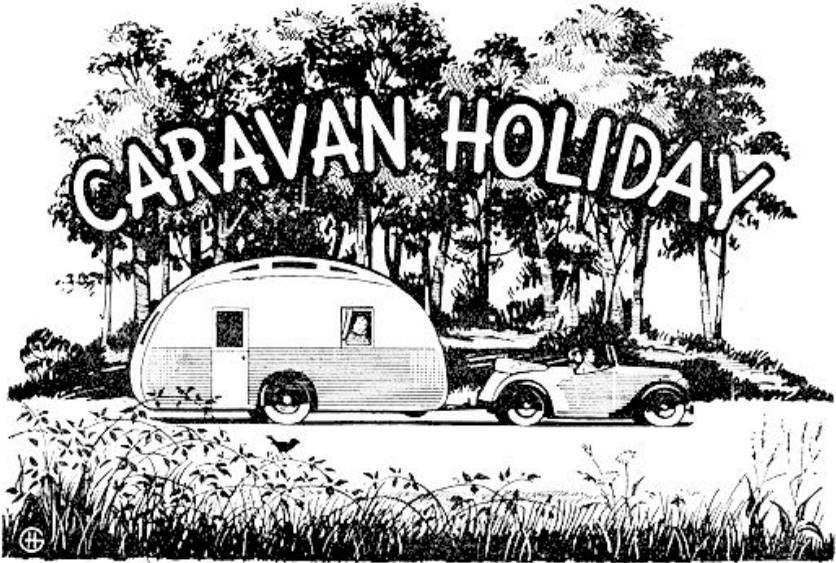
They ran round the garden in the blustering wind. Their windmills whirred marvellously—just as well as the bought ones did.

"It's a baby toy, so you can have mine, Lucy," said Jack. "But I enjoyed making it. Miss Hannah—will you show us how to make some more things, on rainy days?"

"Of course," said Miss Hannah. "You've only got to tell me what you want! Now come along in to tea or your mother will never let me sit with you again!"

(For the next Rainy Afternoon, see page [78](#).)

CARAVAN HOLIDAY



"Aren't we going to have a summer holiday this year?" said Geoffrey, gloomily. "Nobody's mentioned one."

"Don't be a selfish little beast," said Ann, his thirteen-year-old sister. "You know Mummy's been frightfully ill, and Daddy's spent no end of money on her. We can't possibly mention summer holidays."

"No, we can't," said her older sister, Jenny. "All the same—we could do with one after all our worry and anxiety."

"Quite right," said Roddy, looking up from his book. He was eighteen, and kept all the others in order. "We could do with one. And we're going to have one. I've arranged it."

"Oh, *Roddy*! Have you! You never said a word!"

"Well, I've only *just* arranged it," said Roddy. "Dad's lending me his little car—and I've borrowed a caravan from a friend of mine—and I thought we'd go caravanning for two weeks."

"Golly! How wizard!"

"I say, *Roddy*! What made you think of it?"

"I'd rather do that than anything in the world!"

Roddy grinned. "I thought you'd like it. I shall drive the car, of course. None of you kids is old enough to do that. Geoff and I can sleep in a tent each night, and you two girls can bunk in the caravan."

"It'll be super," sighed Jenny.

"That depends," said Roddy. "Caravanning isn't the same as going to stay at a swank hotel, you know, where all your beds are made for you, your meals cooked and everything done. We shall have to do everything ourselves."

"I can't cook," said Jenny. "I don't like that sort of thing. I'm no good at it."

"Well, you'll have to try your hand at it," said Roddy. "We'll all have our jobs. Mine will be the car and looking after it. Geoff's will be all the odd jobs of getting wood for the fire, putting up the tent, and that kind of thing. Do you good, Geoff. You're too lazy for words."

Geoffrey *was* lazy. He wouldn't do a thing for anyone unless he had to. But he was so excited about the idea of going off in a caravan that he was ready to promise anything.

"You and Ann will have to do the shopping, cleaning and cooking," said Roddy. "And I hope Ann gets over her fear of cows, horses, earwigs, bats, snakes, moths and caterpillars, as we are quite likely to meet a good many of them on our way!"

Ann shivered. She was very silly about things like that. But she was not going to give up this holiday lightly. Perhaps they wouldn't meet so many of those awful things as Roddy thought.

"And before we go, one thing's to be quite understood," said Roddy. "My word's law, see? You all toe the mark on this holiday, and nobody shirks or messes about. We've got to pull together if we're going to enjoy ourselves."

"And if you play any monkey tricks, young Geoff, I'll kick you out," said Roddy, still in a very friendly tone, but with a hint of sternness behind it that made Geoff remember how he had forgotten to clean his bicycle the week before, and had lost Roddy's knife only yesterday.



"Quite right," said Roddy, looking up from his book.



They all read the little guide eagerly.

They all began to talk hard. What clothes to take—where they would go—how to manage about camping each night.

"I've got a camper's guide," said Roddy, pulling it out. "It gives all the fields we are allowed to camp in, and which farmer to go to about it, and the rules you have to keep. No leaving field gates open for cattle or horses to stray out of, you know. Things like that."

They all read the little guide eagerly. They decided to strike out across country, keeping close to farms, so that they could buy food easily.

"Will Daddy's little car pull a heavy caravan?" asked Geoff. Roddy nodded. "Oh yes—easily. It's not one of those monster caravans, you know. It's arriving to-morrow."

Sure enough it did. The children rushed to the drive to watch it being towed in. It was painted blue and yellow, and was quite modern. They opened the door and went inside.

"A sink! With taps to turn! Where does the water come from—a tank in the roof?"

"Look at all the cups and plates and things. And it's even got a cooking stove."

"Look at these bunks. They fold up flat in the day-time. They look jolly comfortable."

"Bags I the top one."

They were all delighted with it. They wished their mother and father were there too, but they had gone away. Their mother was convalescing now, and the children had been left in charge of old Hannah, the cook-housekeeper, and Roddy.

Hannah spoilt them and Roddy didn't. Roddy was quite determined to take his father's place and keep them in order. Lazy Geoff, fussy Jenny, and timid Ann were all in awe of their big brother.

"We're starting off to-morrow, don't forget," said Roddy to Jenny. "See that everything is packed into the caravan—all the things we'll need, I mean. Hannah will help you. You're fifteen now, and you ought to be able to manage all that."

"Well, Ann must help," said Jenny, who hated jobs of this sort. She had made up her mind she was going to be an actress when she was grown up, very beautiful, very much sought-after and spoilt. She didn't mean to do all the things her mother did so well. *She* wasn't going to bother about dull things like mending and making, cooking, cleaning and washing. Let somebody else do those!

Ann and Jenny set to work to pack, though actually Hannah did most of it. Geoff was sent to clean the outside of the caravan. It was beautifully clean inside but had got splashed with mud during a rain-storm on the way. Roddy went to get the little car filled up with petrol and oil, and to have the tyres pumped up, too.

They were all ready to start out the next day. Hannah waved goodbye, thinking with relief that now she really *could* get on with a bit of cleaning. The little car started up with Roddy driving it and Geoff sitting beside him.



"A sink! with taps to turn!"



It was at the top of a hill.

The girls were looking out of the caravan windows, waiting for the jerk that would tell them they were really off. The sun shone down brilliantly. It was going to be very, very hot.

"Here we go!" said Roddy, and the car started up. The caravan jerked and followed. Down the drive they ran, the caravan running docilely after the little car.

"Goodbye, Hannah!" shrieked Jenny. "We're off! We're going to have a simply WONDERFUL time!"

Down the road they went, the caravan running very smoothly. The girls loved being in it whilst it was going. They pulled down the bunks and sat on them to see what they felt like. "Gorgeous!" said Ann. "Wizard! Isn't Roddy clever to have thought of hols like this for us?"

Soon they were several miles on their way. It was now very hot and the girls opened the windows and door of the caravan. They went on until they came to the place where they had decided to have their lunch. It was at the top of a hill, and there was a magnificent view from where they sat, munching sandwiches hungrily.

"This is lovely," said Geoff, lying down on his back. "I wish I could eat some more. But I can't. I feel like a nap."

"Well, pick up your sandwich papers first, you lazy kid," said Roddy. "Don't leave litter about."

"Can't just now," said Geoff, sleepily. "Will in a minute."

Roddy said no more. Geoff's sandwich papers did a little dance in the wind and then flew off down the hill. Roddy didn't do anything to stop them. Ann took a look at his face and grinned. She knew what that look meant!

"Half an hour's rest and we'll go on," announced Roddy, taking out a book from his pocket. The girls wandered off to pick flowers for the vase in the caravan. Geoff did a little light snoring.

When the girls appeared again with a lovely bunch of flowers, Roddy poked Geoff with his foot. "Wake up, Geoff. Pick up your sandwich papers, and come to the car. Buck up!"

Geoff sat up and looked round. "Where are the beastly papers?" he asked. "Can't see them."

"Down there," said Roddy, pointing far down the hill. "Buck up! If you'd picked them up when you were told to, you wouldn't have had to go miles after them."

"I'm jolly well not going to climb all the way down there this hot afternoon!" said Geoff, indignantly.

"Don't, then. But you're not coming into the car till you've got them," said Roddy. "I'll give you ten minutes, whilst I get some water for the car's radiator."



Geoff sat up and looked around.

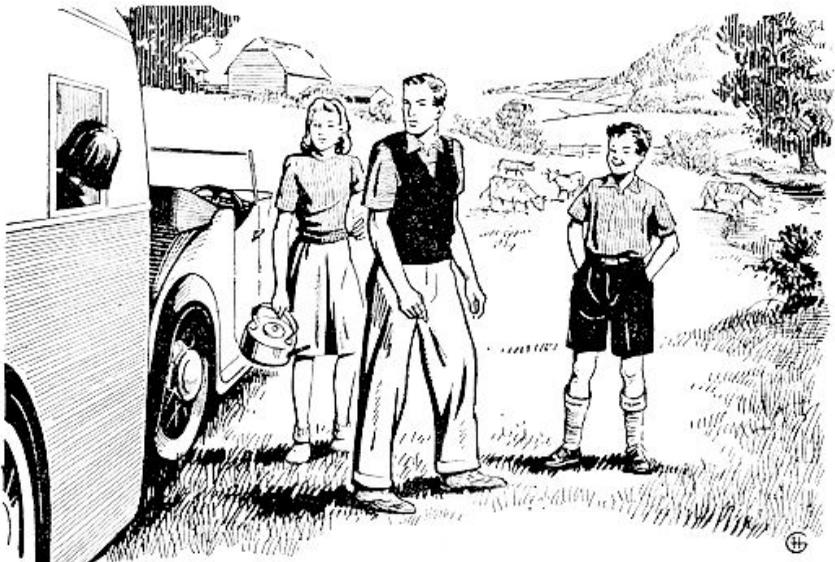
So Geoff sulkily climbed down to fetch the sandwich papers, and grew very hot indeed clambering back. Roddy grinned at him. "Your own fault, old boy," he said. "One of the rules of caravanners and campers, you know—leave no litter!"

They set off again. It was a lovely ride. The sun shone down, hotter than ever, but there was always a breeze blowing through the caravan, and Roddy had the hood of the car down.

They missed out tea because they had had such an enormous lunch. They rode on and on for miles, passing through tiny villages, bigger towns, going up and down hills, and over bridges.

Then at last they came to where they were to camp for the night. It was a big field, with a small clear stream running by one end of it. Cows stood not far off, staring and chewing the cud.

Ann gave a scream. "Not here, Roddy! There are cows!"



They came to where they were to camp for the night.

"So there are. Good. We can get some milk from the farm in the morning," said Roddy, stepping out of the car. "I'm just going to arrange things with the farmer. Geoff, get a fire going please, to cook a meal. You know

how to. You'll find plenty of twigs in that little wood yonder. Ann, you and Jenny get a meal ready. Some bacon and tomatoes would be nice. There's a frying-pan in the caravan."

He went off, paying no attention to Ann's wailing. "But I'm afraid of the cows, Roddy, I can't stay here for the night. You know how I hate cows."

"Well, they must hate you too, coming into their field and yowling about them like that," said Geoff, in disgust. "I'm going to get some sticks for the fire. You'd better stay in the caravan, Ann, in case one of the cows comes over to see what you're making a fuss about. If I were a cow I'd stick my horns in you and toss you over the hedge."

"You're a hateful boy," wailed Ann, and would not stir out of the caravan at all. Jenny was cross.

"You might help me," she grumbled. "You know I'm not much good at cooking. Oh blow—where did we put the bacon?"

She got everything ready, and Ann gave her a little help, though she would not come out of the caravan. But when Jenny was ready with the frying-pan, the bacon, the tomatoes and a bit of lard, there was no fire!

"Geoff! Geoff! Where are you? You haven't made the fire, you lazy thing!" she yelled.

Geoff was nowhere to be seen. He had gone to the wood to get firewood and had suddenly seen a very large rabbit staring at him. It bolted off a little way then sat up and stared at him again. Geoff believed he might catch it if only he could get near enough. It seemed so very tame.

He forgot all about the firewood. So, when Roddy came back, carrying a pint of milk, some new-laid eggs and a little butter, there was no sign of a meal. He was feeling tired and hungry, and he looked at Jenny in exasperation.

"Well, I did expect you'd have the meal ready."

"It's Geoff. He went off for the firewood and hasn't come back," said Jenny.

"Well, why didn't you send Ann for some?" said Roddy. "Where is she?"

"In the caravan. She won't come out because of the cows," said Jenny.

"Right," said Roddy. "She can stay there."

He went to a copse of nearby trees and brought back some twigs. He had soon made a fine fire. Jenny put some bacon and tomatoes into the pan.

"Wait—we shan't need all that," said Roddy. "Geoff's not here—and Ann's not coming. Just cook enough for two." Ann heard him. "I'm hungry, too!" she called. "I want some bacon."

"Well, are you going to come out here and have it then?" said Roddy. "If not, you won't get any. Silly little idiot! Frightened of cows indeed! You're just putting it on."

Bacon and tomatoes and bread were fried for two people. Then Roddy poured out cups of creamy milk. He and Jenny ate a delicious meal, listening to a yellow-hammer somewhere that kept saying "Little bit of bread and no *cheese*."

Ann peered out of the caravan. She was so hungry that she thought she would brave the cows after all. "I'm coming," she said. "Cook me some supper."

"Cook it yourself!" said Jenny. "I'm not going to start all over again for *you*, Ann!"

"Nice polite family we are," said Roddy. "Well, they say there's nothing like a caravan holiday to knock the rough corners off people!"

Ann looked at the fire. It was almost out. She would have to find sticks and make it all over again. She couldn't be bothered. Besides she would have to go near the cows to get sticks. So she had some bread and butter and milk, and made that do.

"Now you two go and wash the things in the stream," said Roddy. "Hallo, here's Geoff!"

Geoff came along carrying an armful of wood. "I say," he called as he came near. "I've been stalking the tamest rabbit you ever saw. Nearly caught it too. Hope I haven't kept you waiting for the wood."

"Well, you have," said Jenny, indignantly. "We waited ages. We've had our supper. There's no bacon or tomatoes for you, because Roddy wouldn't let me cook any. You can have bread and butter and milk."

"But I say—I'm jolly hungry," began Geoff, crossly. He glanced at Roddy's face and decided to say no more. He cut himself some bread and butter, and took a raw tomato.

"Come on, Ann—let's wash up," said Jenny with a yawn. "I don't know why I feel so sleepy, but I do. It'll be fun to get into those comfy bunks and go to sleep with the owls hooting around."

"I don't like owls," said Ann. "And if you don't mind, Jenny, I'm going back into the caravan. Those cows have come a bit nearer."

"You'll go and help with the washing-up, Ann, or I'll put you on the train to-morrow morning and send you back to Hannah," said Roddy, suddenly. Ann stared at the cows and then at Roddy. She decided she was much

more scared of Roddy. It would be terrible to go back home before the holiday had properly begun. So, pulling a long face, she walked over the grass with Jenny, keeping as far away from the cows as she could.





They washed the things in the stream. "Isn't Roddy strict?" said Ann. "I hope he's not going to be like this all the time. Oh, look at that cow. It's coming over here, I know it is!"

She fled back to the caravan. Jenny followed, grinning, carrying the washed crockery. The boys were putting up their tent. Roddy was showing Geoff exactly how to do it.

"And mind you, you've got to do exactly as I've shown you, or you'll have the tent down on top of us another night," said Roddy. "This will be your job in future, Geoff—putting up the tent at night and taking it down when we leave in the morning."

"We're going to bed, Roddy," said Jenny, with a yawn. "Do you mind? I'm most frightfully sleepy."

"No, you turn in," said Roddy. "And you'd better turn in too, Geoff. Put the sleeping-bags in the tent—ground sheets first, of course. That's right. I'm going for a bit of a stroll. I won't wake any of you if you're asleep. If you're too hot at night, Jenny, leave the caravan door open."

“Oh no—the cows might walk in!” cried Ann.

It was fun going to bed in the caravan. The girls let down the two bunks, and arranged the bed-clothes. They washed at the little sink, and were delighted to get into their night-gowns and snuggle down into the bunks.

Ann had the top one. At the foot of it was one of the caravan windows. Ann opened it to let air into the caravan, because it was very hot.

“Oh, let’s have the door open too,” said Jenny, and swung it wide open. A breath of sweet-smelling air came in.

“No, Jenny. I simply *won’t* have it open,” said Ann at once. “Honestly, the cows might walk in.”

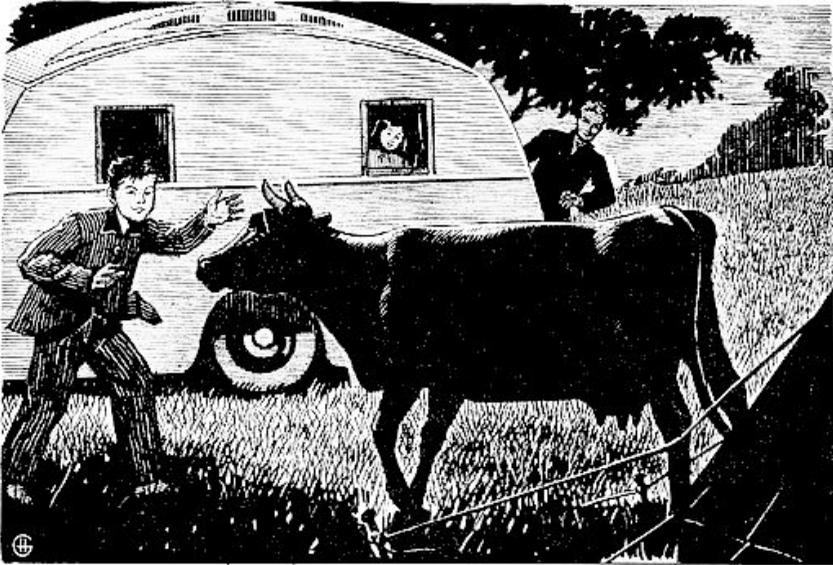
“What—up the steps!” cried Jenny. “Don’t be so silly.”

But Ann made such a terrible fuss that in the end Jenny shut the door, grumbling hard. Ann peeped out of the open window by her bunk. She saw Geoffrey standing at the tent-opening in his pyjamas, and called goodnight to him.

“I’m just going to get into my sleeping-bag!” he said. “All nice and cosy. Roddy’s not back yet, but he won’t be long.”

Soon the two girls were almost asleep. It was nice to hear the gurgle of the stream in the twilight. A bird gave a sudden little song. It was a late robin. Then there was only the stream, and the wind in the trees to be heard. The girls fell asleep.

They didn’t hear Roddy come back, and get into his sleeping-bag too. They didn’t hear the sleepy voice of Geoff talking to Roddy for a while. They heard nothing at all—until Ann awoke with a jump.



The cow backed away and got its feet tangled.

She knew where she was at once—in the caravan, of course. How lovely! Then suddenly something bumped against it and shook it. What could it be? Ann sat up and leaned over to the window to look out.

Something was looking in! Ann saw an enormous face, and smelt a hot sweet breath. She screamed at the top of her voice, and everyone woke up.

“Help! Help! Something’s come to get me!” yelled Ann, and stared in horror at the face still looking in at the window. It was not a very dark night, but dark enough for Ann not to be able to see exactly what it was—and light enough for her to make out two big staring eyes.

“What is it, Ann?” cried Jenny, sitting up. Ann went on screaming. Roddy and Geoff came rushing into the caravan, scared stiff. Whatever was happening to the girls?

“Look—look—something’s come to get me!” screamed Ann. “Make it go away! Kill it, Roddy.”

Roddy flashed on his torch. Now the enormous face at the window could be seen clearly. It had a long brown and white nose, big eyes fringed with long eye-lashes—and a pair of great, curving horns.

“Good heavens—it’s only a cow,” said Roddy, in disgust. “Just a cow looking in at the window—and you scream the place down and wake everyone up! I’m ashamed of you, Ann.”

The cow backed away and got its feet tangled in the ropes of the tent. Geoff ran to shoo it off, afraid that the tent might come down.

“Just find out whether there’s something to scream about before you wake us all up again,” said Roddy. “No—don’t shut the window, Ann—this caravan is like a furnace!”

“I won’t have cows breathing all over me through the window,” said Ann, in tears.

“Well, I shall leave the door open then,” said Jenny. “I’m not going to suffocate in here because of your fear of cows. You can choose whether you’ll have cows breathing over you, or cows trying to climb up the steps of the caravan.”

“Or you can take my sleeping-bag and a ground-sheet and sleep *under* the caravan,” said Roddy, grinning to himself. Ann gave a squeal.

“What—with hedgehogs and earwigs and things running all over me! You beast, Roddy!”

The door remained open. Ann lay listening for cows again, but none came. So she fell asleep, and did not disturb anyone again that night.

It was a lovely day when they all woke up at last. Ann awoke first because she heard cows mooing and she sat up in fright, thinking they were in the caravan. But they were at the other end of the field. A little dog was looking in at the door and Ann stared back at him.

Should she squeal and wake Jenny because there was a strange dog there? The little thing looked at her and wagged its tail. And, to her surprise, Ann heard herself saying, “Good little dog, then!”

Whereupon the dog came right into the caravan, saw Jenny’s face nearby on the lower bunk and gave it a lick! Jenny woke up suddenly and Ann nearly rolled out of the top bunk, squealing with laughter at the sight of Jenny’s astonished face.

“Golly—do you mean to say you’re not scared of this dog?” said Jenny, seeing Ann lean down to pat it. “What’s come over you?”

They had breakfast out in the field. Boiled eggs, bread and butter, ripe plums and milk that Geoff had just fetched from the farm. It tasted quite different from exactly the same breakfast at home!

They set off in the caravan again. Jenny and Ann had washed up the plates, and looked at the map with the boys. “Over the hills and far away!” sang Ann, happily. “I’m coming in the car, Roddy. Jenny wants to, too. Is there room for us all?” Roddy put his head in at the door of the caravan before he answered. Then he looked cross.

“Just look here!” he said to the girls. “Your bunks aren’t made. The caravan isn’t tidied up. And Jenny’s clothes are all over the place. You’re two lazy kids, and you won’t come in the front of the car with me till everything is spick and span.”

“We can do all that later on,” said Jenny sulkily.

“Well, you won’t,” said Roddy. “I never knew such a putter-off as you, Jenny. I tell you, if you don’t play your part properly during this holiday, I’ll leave you behind somewhere!”

He went off to show Geoffrey how to fix the car to the caravan. It was quite easy but had to be done carefully. “I could do this each day for you,” said Geoff, anxious to be in Roddy’s good books.

“Right,” said Roddy. “I’ll trust you to do that. It’s time you had a bit of responsibility. After all, you’re in your teens now—not a silly kid.”

They had a lovely day. When they came to a beautiful old village Roddy stopped at a garage to have a tyre mended. He thought one wheel had a slow puncture.

“You kids can wander about a bit,” he said. “Do you good to stretch your legs. Jenny, don’t forget you’re responsible for the food side of this holiday. Geoff, here’s some money—get me some cigarettes, will you? And Ann, buy some post-cards somewhere and send one off to Mother. You know her address.”

“We’d do everything without being told so often!” said Ann. “You’re always telling us to do things.”

“If I thought you’d do them without being told, I wouldn’t open my mouth!” said Roddy, with a grin. “But you wouldn’t! Now, cut along.”

A little way beyond the village was a big field. Hearing curious trumpeting sounds from it, the three children went to explore, Ann a little timidly.

“I say, look—it’s a circus camp,” said Geoff, thrilled. “Let’s come and sit on the fence and watch. We might see something.”

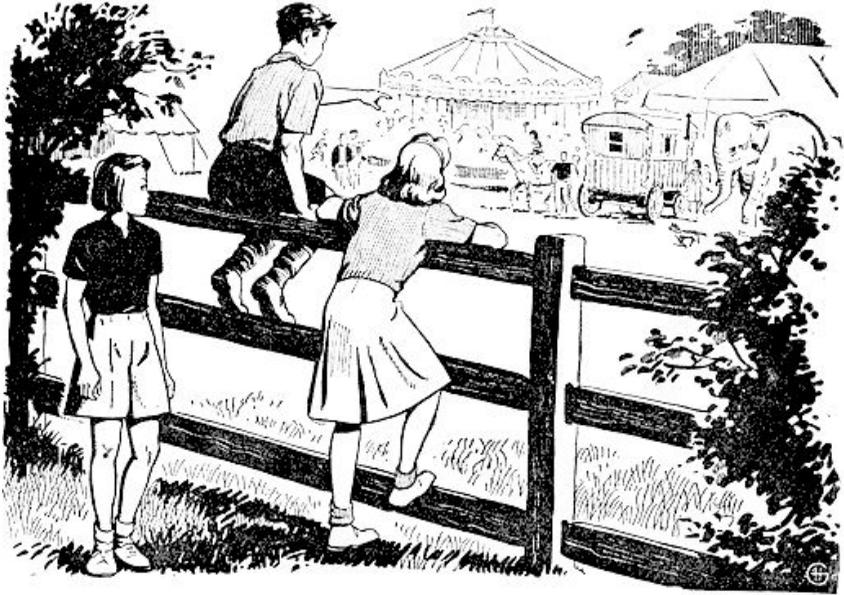
“Will there be lions or tigers or bears?” asked Ann, looking scared.

“Dozens!” said Geoff, wickedly. “And probably crocodiles and enormous snakes, and . . .”

Ann screamed and wouldn't go any nearer. In fact, she decided not to look at all when she saw one of the elephants apparently going for a walk by itself round the field. She left the others and went back to the town.

She found some post-cards and wrote one to her mother. Then she wandered about by herself, buying some sweets in a little shop.

Soon it was half-past twelve—the time Roddy had told them all to be back at the caravan. The others came running up at the same time. Roddy looked pleased. "Good. I quite thought I'd have to sit here for ages tooting my horn for you. Get in."



"Look—it's a circus camp!"

Up the hills and down, once catching a glimpse of blue sea far away, went the little company of caravanners. They had tea in a cottage garden, and ate new honey with new-baked bread and hot scones. They all had enormous appetites, and the cottage woman had to bring them out a second supply of her scones.

"We'll be at our next stopping-place in nice time," said Roddy, looking at the map. "See—there it is—South Tollington—and we ask for Farmer Fenton. There's no stream nearby though—so we can't wash in stream water—we'll have to make do with the caravan water."

They arrived about seven o'clock. Roddy went off to the farm at once, and came back in a few minutes' time looking rather annoyed.

"He says we can stay for the night, but he won't let us have any milk or anything," said Roddy. "Apparently the last lot of campers stole two or three of his chickens—or so he says—and now he's not going to supply anybody else with anything. Never mind—we must make do with what we've got. What are we going to have for supper, Jenny?"

Jenny suddenly looked dismayed. She stared at Roddy, going red. "I—I don't know," she said.

"Whatever do you mean—you *don't know*?" said Roddy. "What did you buy this morning?"

"Well—actually Roddy—you see—what happened—well, you see . . ." began Jenny, going redder than ever.

"Answer me properly," said Roddy.

"I forgot about the shopping," said Jenny. "Geoff and I found a circus in the field—and we went and sat on the fence—and . . ."

"Do you mean to say there's no supper for us?" cried Roddy. "And I can't get anything from the farm either. Well, you really are the limit. Selfish, lazy lot—that's what you are!"

"I did buy some cards and send one to Mother," said Ann, in rather a small voice. The others rounded on her at once.

"Yes, and why did you? Only because you were scared of looking at the circus camp!"

“Well, I’ll have a cigarette and go off for a stroll,” said Roddy, in disgust. “Where are my cigarettes, Geoff? I gave you the money for them this morning.”

Now it was Geoff’s turn to go red and to stammer. He had forgotten those too! Roddy stared at him in anger, swung on his heel, and went off by himself. The others felt most uncomfortable, but instead of blaming themselves, they began to say nasty things about Roddy.

“Always flying into a temper!”

“Expecting us to do every single thing he tells us.”

“Blow his beastly cigarettes.”

All the same it was distinctly annoying to have no supper, because they were all very hungry. The cupboard in the caravan was bare except for a hunk of stale bread and a bit of hard cheese. Jenny looked at it. “We’d better let Roddy have that,” she said, and put it on a plate.

“And I’d better put up the tent,” said Geoff sulkily. “Get into a row if I don’t!”

He put it up carelessly. The girls, feeling hungry and cross, decided to go to bed. There were no cows to worry about to-night, but there was a large spider in a corner of the caravan that made Ann squeal. However, neither Jenny nor Geoff would remove it.

“Squeal away,” said Geoff. “Go on till Roddy comes back if you dare. He’s in a mood to box your ears to-night!”

So Ann stopped squealing and got fearfully into her bunk. Geoff got into his sleeping-bag and waited for Roddy. But Roddy was a very, very long time. He had found somewhere to have a meal and to buy some cigarettes and he sat there for a long while. What was he to do with his lazy, irresponsible, selfish brother and sisters? He had given up a lovely holiday in Scotland to give the kids a treat—and if this kind of thing was going to happen all the time he was going to wish he had gone to Scotland after all!

He didn’t see the plate of bread and cheese when he got back. A rat discovered it in the night and helped himself. It was a good thing that Ann didn’t know that or she would have squealed the place down again! Roddy got into his sleeping-bag, yawned and went to sleep.

The wind got up in the night. The rain came down in squalls. It beat against the caravan and the tent. The wind tugged at the tent and made it flap.

Suddenly something gave way, and the tent collapsed completely. It fell over Roddy and Geoff, waking them up suddenly, smothering them as they tried to push away the heavy canvas.

“Good heavens! The tent’s down!” said Roddy at last. “You silly little idiot, Geoff—I suppose you put it up carelessly as I wasn’t there to watch you. Now we’ll have to mess about in the dark and the rain for ages!”

The two boys had a very difficult time with the collapsed tent. Roddy made Geoff work hard, for he knew it was his fault. Geoff knew that too. It would have been all right if only this wind hadn’t got up! Blow!



The tent collapsed completely.

Cold, wet through, and cross, the boys were at last able to get into their sleeping-bags and settle down in the newly-put-up tent again. Geoff was sulky and would not apologize. Roddy was angry.

“I had to go off and find a meal for myself to-night,” he began, “and I’ve a good mind to go off and find a bed for myself too. Not one of you does his or her bit . . .”

“How mean of you—getting a fine supper for yourself and forgetting all about *us!*” said Geoff, angrily, feeling hungrier than ever.

“I didn’t forget you,” said Roddy. “You went hungry because it was your own faults—jolly good lesson for you—but I didn’t see why *I* should suffer because of your carelessness and forgetfulness. And what about this tent to-night? What about an apology for your carelessness over that?”

“You won’t get one,” said Geoff. “I think you’re a beast. You can cuff me for cheek if you like, but I really do think it’s the limit getting a meal for yourself and . . .”

“One more word from you and you’ll get out of this tent,” said Roddy. He meant it. Geoff didn’t say another word. He was angry with Roddy—but he was angry with himself too for being careless over putting up the tent.

Nobody was very cheerful in the morning. For one thing Ann, Jenny and Geoff were very hungry and there was nothing to eat till they got to the next town. For another thing there was no water for anyone to wash in!

That was Ann’s fault! She had left the tap running a little all night long—and now there was no water left in the tank on the roof of the caravan. Most annoying.

“Well, I really don’t expect anything else from any of you,” said Roddy, sarcastically. “No food—no water—no cigarettes—tent collapsing. There’s not much else you *can* do!”

He went off to tell the farmer they were leaving. “Come and help me fix the caravan to the car, for goodness sake,” said Geoff to the others. “I’ll get into another row if I don’t do it just how he showed me.”

“Do it yourself,” said Jenny, annoyed. “I’ve got the caravan to tidy. *I* shall get into a row if I don’t do that. This is a beastly holiday. I hate it. I wish it would end quickly.”

Roddy came back, saw that the caravan was fixed to the car, noticed the three sulky faces, and said nothing. He felt sad. They had all looked forward to this holiday—and now, just because they couldn’t pull together and each play their part, it was going to be a failure.

They set off. They had a good breakfast in the next town and felt a bit better. They even began to talk cheerfully again. “Where are we going to-day? What are we going to do?”

“I thought we might head towards the sea now,” said Roddy, opening the map. “The weather is so hot we could do with a bit of sea-bathing. We might get permission to put the caravan up on the cliffs somewhere, so that we could get a good view of the sea.”

Everyone cheered up considerably. This sounded simply lovely. “Yes, let’s go towards the sea,” said Jenny. “We’ve brought bathing-suits with us, luckily.”

They set off again. They were all sitting in the car because they wanted to catch first sight of the sea when they came to it. They had pleasant thoughts of bathing in the cool water and basking in the sun to dry.

“Golly! Look at this hill we’ve got to climb!” said Jenny. “Isn’t it frightfully steep?”

It was. The little car groaned up it. Roddy stopped halfway and made the other three get out. “If we get rid of your weight, maybe the caravan won’t be too heavy for the car,” he said. He set off again, and the children followed on foot.

And then suddenly something dreadful happened. Geoff had not fixed the caravan properly to the car, and the steepness of the hill, making the van drag heavily on the car, broke the fastening between them. The caravan broke away—the car suddenly shot forward, relieved of its weight—and the caravan began to run backwards down the hill, all by itself!

“Look! Look!” screamed Ann, suddenly. “The caravan is running backwards. It’s broken away from the car! Look out!”

The caravan, looking most peculiar, lumbered down the hill, gathering speed as it went. The frightened children squeezed into the hedge as it passed them, afraid of being knocked down. Strangely enough the caravan kept to the roadway, though it veered occasionally from side to side.

Roddy stopped the car. He jumped out of it in time to see the caravan careering down the hill by itself. He stood in horror, unable to do anything to stop it. He felt suddenly very sick. A most terrible accident might be caused. Suppose another car was coming up the hill?

The caravan turned a corner and disappeared from sight. Roddy waited for the sound of a crash. Ann ran up the hill to him, white-faced and sobbing.

“Roddy! Roddy! The caravan’s gone. Oh, Roddy!”

The others joined Roddy too, pale and frightened. “Oh, Roddy,” said Geoff, his mouth quivering, “it was my fault I know. I didn’t fix it properly.”

They all sat down, feeling very shaky at the knees. Roddy put his arm round Ann, who was almost sick with fright.

"It's a dreadful thing," he said, in a queer voice. "I—I hardly like to go down the hill—and see what's happened. The least we can hope for is that the caravan has smashed itself—without smashing any other car or hurting anyone."

"I wished for this holiday to come to an end—but I didn't mean it to be like this," wept Jenny. "Oh, Roddy, it's awful. Will we have to pay for the caravan?"

"Of course—and for any damage it has done too," said Roddy, looking as white as the others. "I ought to have looked to see that Geoff had fixed it properly. It's my fault too. Perhaps I've tried to make you do too many things—in the wrong way. Well, this is a terrible punishment for not being able to pull together."

"Don't say things like that!" cried Jenny. "And don't look like that, Roddy. We've been awful. We haven't helped you a bit. Oh, I wish we could begin all over again, and do better."

"Well, we can't," said Roddy, getting up. "The holiday is finished. The caravan is smashed to pieces. Come on—we'll have to go and face it sometime."

In silence they went down the hill. Round the corner they went, afraid of what they might see. There was no sign of the caravan at all. They went on, looking fearfully from side to side. But there was no caravan to be seen.

They met an old man. "Have you seen our caravan running away?" asked Roddy. The old man looked most astonished and shook his head. "I ain't seen no caravan at all," he said. "You didn't ought to let one run away. Them's not safe things running about on their own."

The children would have smiled at this any other time. But they couldn't now. They hurried on, afraid of what they might see at any moment.

Soon they came to a gap in the hedge. It looked as if something had broken through. They looked over the hedge and saw a most extraordinary sight!

There, standing quietly in the field, was their caravan, surrounded by a circle of astonished, staring cows. It did not appear to be damaged at all. There it was, gleaming blue and yellow, standing by a little stream.

They ran to it in excitement. They went all round it, their faces glowing.

"Roddy! It's not damaged at all! Not even a scratch, except just here where the thorns in the hedge caught at it!"

"Oh, Roddy—it's too good to be true!"

"I can't believe it! Not a thing wrong with it!"

Ann was so delighted to see the caravan, whole and undamaged, that she took no notice of the cows at all. She slipped her arm through Roddy's.

"Oh, Roddy—aren't you glad? Our holiday isn't ended after all!"

Roddy pulled the others down on to a bank and looked at them gravely. "Well," he said, "it's a miracle the caravan is all right and that it hasn't smashed into anything or hurt anyone. But I think, kids, our holiday is at an end, anyhow. This is a terrible lesson to us. Because we didn't all play our parts and pull together as we should have done, this happened. We had better go home before anything worse comes."

Geoff looked at Roddy. "Nothing worse will come, Roddy. Don't break up this holiday. I'll play my part in future. You can absolutely trust me."

"And me too," said Jenny. "I'm sorry for all my temper and forgetfulness. Honestly, I'll do my bit. I feel so very, very thankful that nothing terrible has happened after all."

"I do, too," said Ann. "I won't be silly or fuss any more. I won't even scream when I see a spider. I'll do everything you want me to, Roddy. But do, do let's go on with the holiday. We'll all pull together now."

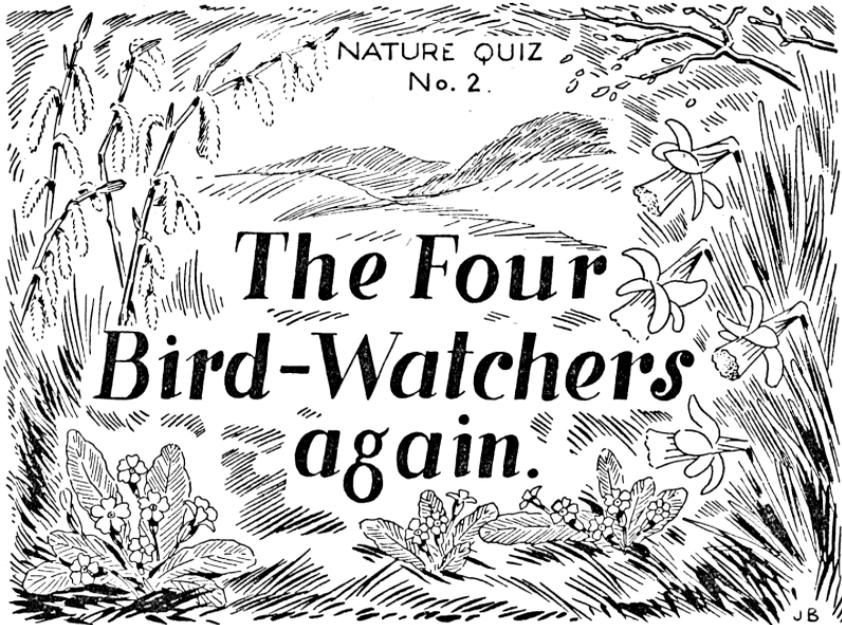
Roddy smiled his nicest smile. "All right," he said. "We'll go on. I hoped you'd all want to. I do, too. We'll have a perfectly splendid time now—lovely meals from Jenny, no more squeals from Ann, plenty of good work from Geoff. And I'll keep my temper and think you're all perfectly wonderful!"

He got up. "We'd better see to the caravan now," he said. "We'll want a bit of help getting it out of this field. Then off we'll go again and make our way towards the sea!"

Two men helped them to get the caravan on the road once more. Roddy ran the car down to it and fixed the two together properly. They all got in.

"Now, off we go," said Roddy. "And this time we'll *really* enjoy ourselves!"





Now it was springtime, and the four bird watchers had taken down their bird-table, because Mother said the birds must catch the flies and grubs.

They saw many more birds now, because the migrants had come back. Swallows, swifts and martins filled the sky, and the chiff-chaff piped in the trees. The nightingale began to sing at night. It was the loveliest season of the year.

Mother came out into the garden. The four children, Richard, Alice, Joan and Jack were lying on their backs, watching the swallows flying high in the air.

"I think you're about ready for another quiz, aren't you?" said Mother, sitting down beside them.

"Oh yes," said Richard. "We know a lot more birds now—still rather common ones, though. We've been watching plenty flying in the sky and hopping among the trees, since we've taken down our bird-table."

"Yes—once you've begun to watch the birds, you can't stop," said Joan. "I'm sure I shall be a bird-watcher for the rest of my life!"

"You will," said Mother. "And a very nice thing to be, too. Well now—are you ready to do a bit of thinking? If so, we'll begin."

"Rather!" said everyone, and gazed expectantly at Mrs. Robins. She looked up into the sky.

"I'm thinking of a beautiful little bird," she said, "that seems to live all its life in the sky. He has a steel-blue back, and he is white below . . ."

"Swallow!" said Richard at once, but the others were silent.

"Wait till I've finished, Richard," said Mrs. Robins. "It might be a swallow and it might not. Well, this bird has a white patch on his back . . ."

"Then it's *not* a swallow!" said Jack. "I thought there was a catch! Swallows are all steel-blue on wings and back!"

"A white patch on his back," repeated Mother, "and he loves to build his nest of mud, just under our eaves."

"I was waiting for that!" cried Joan. "It's a house-martin!"

"Right," said Mother. "I thought someone would make a mistake if they spoke too soon. That's one of the differences between swallow and martin, Richard—the martin has a white patch on his back—and his tail too is shorter and not so forked as the swallow's."

"Yes, I know," said Richard. "I yelled out too soon. Next please, Mrs. Robins."

"This time I'm thinking of another bird that loves the sky," said Mrs. Robins. "Long forked tail, long wings, short beak with a wide gape . . ."

"Swallow!" said Richard again, anxious to be first.

"Do wait, Richard," said Alice. "You can't possibly tell yet. There are three or four birds living all day long in the sky, with long wings and tail, and . . ."

Her mother went on. "He has a white patch under his chin, but everywhere else he is sooty-black. He screeches loudly."

"Swift!" shouted the girls. "The swift screeches. We've heard him."

"Quite right," said Mrs. Robins, smiling. "It *is* the sooty-black swift I'm thinking of. He's just like a little black anchor flying in the sky. Look up and see him."

Everyone watched the fork-tailed birds darting so swiftly about the sky after the myriads of flies there. Mrs. Robins went on.



"And now another fork-tailed bird, this time with chestnut throat and forehead, and white underparts. He is steely blue, and twitters sweetly all . . ."

"*That's* the swallow, surely!" cried Jack, Alice and Joan. Only Richard was silent, because he was so afraid of being wrong again!

"Yes, it's the swallow this time," said Mrs. Robins. "I thought I really must choose him, or Richard would be calling 'swallow' all the time!"

"I know the difference between all three now," said Joan, lazily, lying on her back to watch the birds high in the air. "There goes a swift—and there are three swallows—and there's a whole bunch of martins."

"And now another migrant," said Mother. "Rather like a large brown robin, with no red breast. He has the same habit of flicking his wings."

There was a pause. "Don't know it," said Jack, puzzled. "Like a large brown robin? I don't seem to have noticed a bird like that."



What's its song like?"

"Very beautiful indeed," said his mother. "And loud. Oh, and by the way, he often sings in the middle of the night."

"*Oh!* Nightingale, of course!" shouted everyone. "You left out the most important bit!"

"So I did," said Mrs. Robins. "Now—another migrant that has returned to us. You may not have noticed him very often, because he's the same colouring as the newly-leaving trees—a soft greeny-yellow underneath and green on his back. He has the prettiest little warble of a song, beginning on a high note and going down—'twec-twee, twee-twee, tway, tway, tway!' Ah, listen—there he goes now."



The children listened to the dear little song, and then they saw a small bird dressed in a soft green-yellow, fly from one tree to another.

“Willow-Warbler!” cried Jack. “Aha, I do know him, you see!”

“Very good,” said his mother. “I really thought I might catch you there. Now, another one—a migrant again. I’ve seen him sitting on that tennis post over there many times. A little grey-brown bird, who loves to dart down after flies, and then go back to his post again. There he is, look!”

So he was, a neat little bird, who sat watchfully on the tennis post. Down he went after a fly, and then back again to watch.

“Fly-catcher, fly-catcher!” called the boys. “Easy one.”



“Very easy, seeing that the bird was just under your noses,” said Mother. “Now another common bird—but not a migrant. You’ll find him by the river. He is dressed in blue, green and chestnut. It’s a pity he is such a stumpy-looking bird. He has a very long strong beak and bright, watchful eyes.”

There was a pause. Blue, green and chestnut. It sounded very brilliant indeed.

“I suppose you’re not thinking of a parrot, Mrs. Robins?” asked Richard, a wicked glint in his eye.

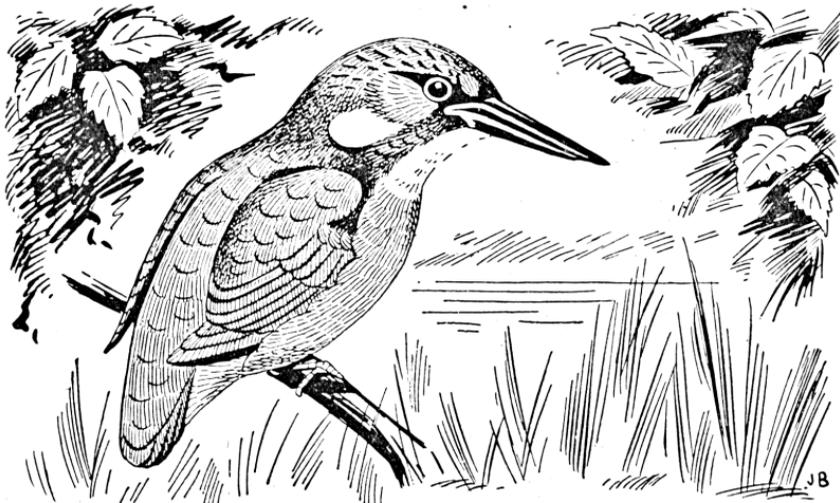
“Dear Richard—you’re very dense just at the moment,” said Mrs. Robins, smiling. “Well, well, poor boy, you must have some more help, I suppose. This bird gets its living by catching fish.”

“Oh, of course—kingfisher!” shouted Jack, getting in first, and making everyone jump. “How idiotic not to think of it straight away. Next, please, Mother.”

“Now a bird whose voice you hear at night,” went on Mrs. Robins.

“We’ve had that. Nightingale,” said Richard at once.

“Don’t try and be so clever, Richard,” said Jack. “There are other birds we hear at night besides nightingales.”



“This bird is dressed in red-brown above, speckled with dark brown, and underneath he is buff-coloured. His face is grey.”

Silence. Nobody liked to say anything for fear of making a mistake.

“Er—what is his song like?” asked Joan.

“His song goes like this,” said Mother. “Hoo-hoo, hoooo-vit! Hoo-hoo . . .”

“Of course. Tawny owl!” cried Joan. “I hear him every night. I love him.”

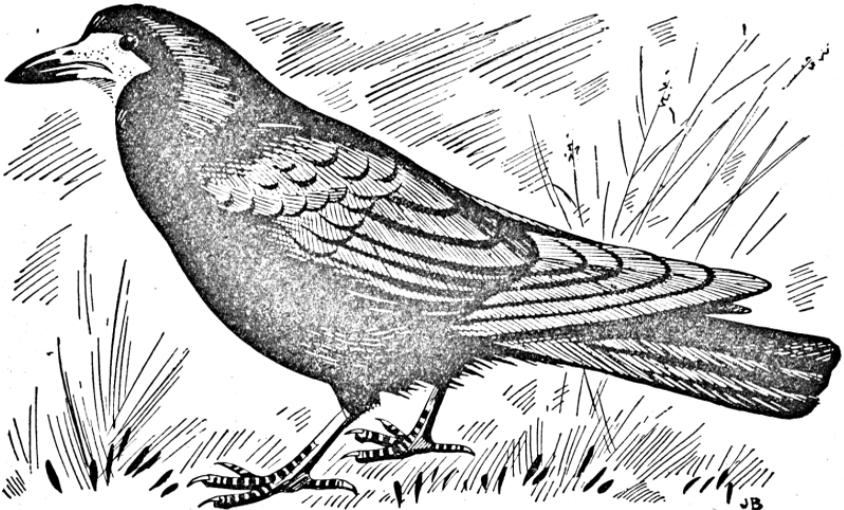
“And now,” said her mother, “another bird we see very often flying in the sky—a big black bird . . .”

Everyone thought of rook, but didn’t say so in case it might be jackdaw! They waited.

“And it says ‘carr-carr,’” finished Mrs. Robins.

“Rook!” said everybody together.

“I thought so at first,” said Joan. “But I was afraid you might add that it had a grey nape to its neck and said ‘chack-chack.’ Then it would have been jackdaw!”



“Yes—I certainly might have tricked you that way!” said her mother. “Rook is right. Now another . . . A gay little bird, about as big as a sparrow, yellowy-brown. He loves to sing from the top of a tree.”

A pause again. Richard spoke cautiously.

“What does he sing?”

“Well, actually he sings ‘a little bit of bread and no *cheese*,’” said Mrs. Robins, and before she had finished there was a yell from everyone.

“Yellowhammer! Why didn’t you tell us his song first?”



"Well, I can't make things *too* easy for you, can I?" said Mrs. Robins. "Now here's another bird high up in the sky, often in enormous flocks. No, Richard, don't shout out pigeons or starlings, you'll be wrong. He looks black and white at a distance, and he has a fine crest. He has a peculiar habit of pretending to have a broken wing, in order to lead people away from the nest, and . . ."

"Lapwing!" yelled Richard.

"Green plover!" shouted the girls.

"Peewit!" said Jack.

They all looked at Mrs. Robins. "Who is right?" said Joan.

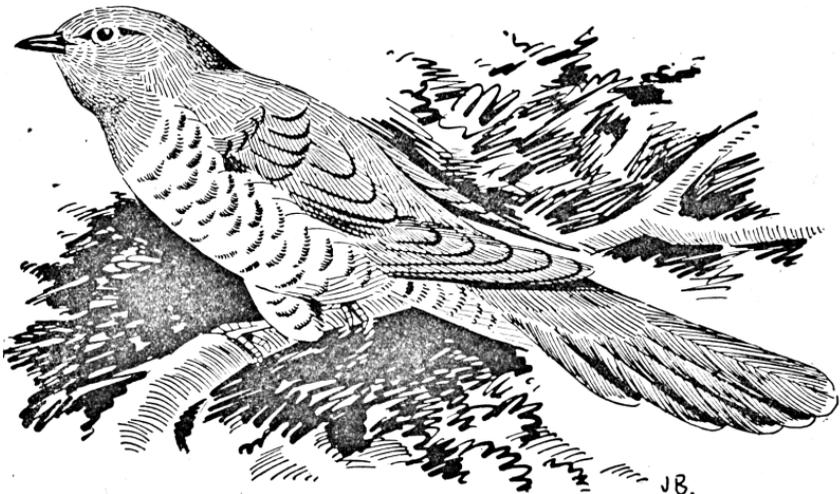
"You *all* are, sillies," said Mrs. Robins. "The peewit, lapwing and green plover are all names for the same bird. Now—just one

more, and that's the dozen. A migrant to finish off with. A big bird, grey, with a white spotted tail. White underneath, crossed with dark bars."

"Hawk," said Jack, after a pause.

"No. A hawk isn't a migrant," said his mother. "Dear me—don't say you're going to fail in this quiz. The very last question, too!"

"Missel-thrush," said Joan, but the others looked at her scornfully.



“The missel-thrush hasn’t a barred chest, silly.”

“What sort of song does it have, Mrs. Robins?” asked Richard.

“Well—it’s not exactly a song,” said Mrs. Robins. “It’s more of a call. I often hear you making the same call.”

“Do you?” said Richard, astonished. “Golly, whatever can it be?”

“Don’t give up, don’t give up,” begged Joan. “Mother, what sort of nest does it make?”

“It doesn’t make one,” said her mother. And that gave the game away, of course!

“Oh, *cuckoo!*” shouted all the children, and Mrs. Robins put her hands to her ears.

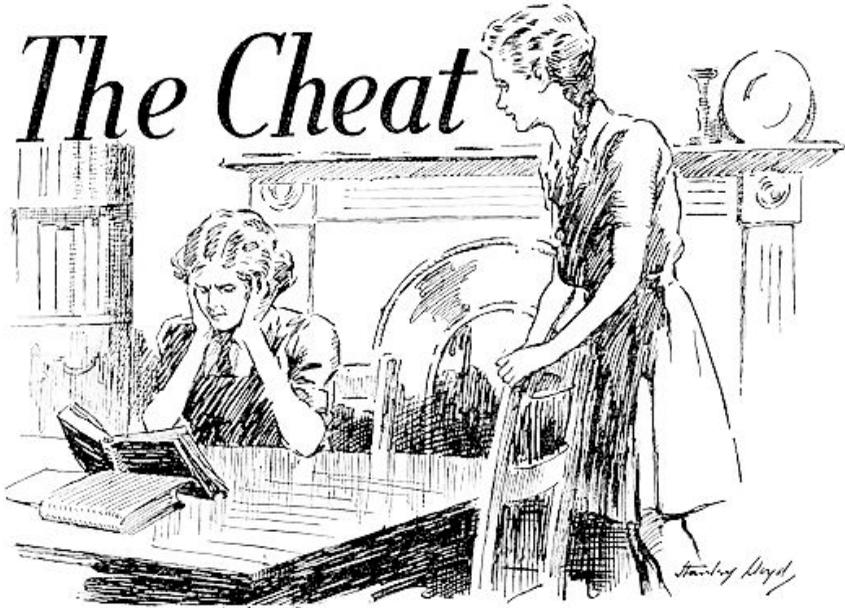
“Quite right,” she said. “Really, I was beginning to think it was a good name for all of you, when I saw how stupid you suddenly were—quite a flock of cuckoos! Well—that ends the quiz, and really, you all did quite well.”

“Oh Mrs. Robins, do give us another quiz sometime,” begged Richard. “Not on birds—on something else.”

“Yes—moths and butterflies!” said Jack, who was very keen on them. “Will you? We’ll watch out for those next.”

“Right,” said Mrs. Robins. “Next quiz—butterflies—the commonest ones that everyone should know!”

(You’ll find it on page [82](#).)



Susan was swotting up for the exam. Her hands were over her ears, and she was repeating dates to herself with her eyes shut, opening them every now and again to see if she was right.

"Susan! SUSAN! Look at her swotting away like that when we want her for rehearsal. Pull her hands away from her ears, somebody!"

Mollie pulled Susan's hands away and she jumped. "What's up?" she said. "Can't you see I'm working?"

"Well, the exam's not till next week," said Pam. "For goodness sake stop working and come and join the rehearsal."

"I know my part. Let somebody else take my place this evening," said Susan. "I really must get on with this."

"No, you come," said Pam. "You've been cramming hard all week. What's the sense? You know you'll pass all right. We're all in the same boat anyway."

"No, you're not," said Susan. "This is a scholarship exam, and it doesn't matter to you whether you win the scholarship or not—but it does to me. I can't go on to college unless I get it."

"Well, for goodness sake, do help us just for once," said Molly. "You backed out of the rehearsal last week. You can't keep on doing that or we'll get somebody else for your part, and you won't like that."

"It's only just till the exam's over," said Susan. "That's one more week. It's really my duty to swot up now, if I want to get the scholarship."

"It's your duty to come to rehearsal and not make things difficult for the others," said Pam, flaring up. "Come on."

So, rather sulkily, Susan went. But as she would keep repeating all the dates she had learnt whenever she was not on the stage, the others got very bored with her.

"We won't ask you to come to any rehearsal or meetings or anything till the exam's over," said Pam, crossly. "You're just no use at all. But let me tell you this—you're an absolute idiot to cram like this, all day and half the night, and not take any time off—it won't do your exam work a bit of good!"

"I'm the best judge of that," said Susan, stiffly. "But all the same I'll be glad not to waste time on rehearsals and meetings for one more week."

So the girls left her alone, and she worked very hard indeed. She *must* win that scholarship, she must. She did so badly want to go to college. She had good brains, she could do well. So she missed out games and any social

gathering all that week, and kept her nose glued to her work.

And, just as Pam had warned her, her work suddenly began to suffer because she slogged at it too hard. She felt very tired. She couldn't remember all she wanted to remember. She began to have headaches, and worse still she found it quite impossible to go to sleep at night.

"This is awful," thought Susan, in a panic. "I shall do frightfully badly. Oh dear—it's so dreadful to have to go over the whole of the term's history and geography and maths and literature—when all we shall be asked is just a few questions on bits of it!"

"Don't you wish you knew what the examiners are going to ask us?" said Mollie to Susan. "We could just swot up those answers then, instead of working hard like this."

"Yes. If only we knew!" said Susan, and put her hands over her ears again, whilst she read through her French grammar.

By the time the day before the exam came Susan was almost in a panic. She couldn't seem to remember anything at all! She would never be able to answer a single question. She would be bottom. She wouldn't have a chance of getting the scholarship.

"Nobody is to work to-night," said Miss Lesley, the form mistress. "I have already warned you of that, but I am telling you again in case there is anyone foolish enough to tire herself out on the evening before the exam."

Susan gazed at her in despair. "But Miss Lesley, I simply *must* go over my geography again. Just once, please. It won't take me long."

"Not even once," said Miss Lesley, firmly. She looked at Susan's pale face and made up her mind that she would keep an eye on her, and not let her slip off anywhere to work unseen.

"I want somebody to take these things to Matron for me," she said, looking round. "Susan, you might as well. Wait for Matron to give you the mended clothes, and then give them out to the right girls."

There was nothing to do but obey. Sulkily Susan got up and took the laundry bag that Miss Lesley held out. She went to Matron and gave it to her.

"Thank you," said Matron. "Now you wait a minute whilst I get all the mended things in a pile. Where's that tunic? Oh, here it is. Bless us all, what in the world did Pamela do to get a tear like that? Now, there's the stockings . . . and the ankle socks . . ."

Susan stood impatiently whilst Matron talked and sorted out things. Oh dear—she could have gone halfway through her geography by now! Never mind. Perhaps when she got back she could slip away with her book. She took the mended things back and gave them out. Then she went to get her geography book, seeing that Miss Lesley was talking to Pam.

But almost at once Miss Lesley called to Susan. "Susan! I want you to do something else for me."

"Blow, blow, blow!" said Susan under her breath. She shut her locker and went to Miss Lesley.



Sulkily Susan got up and took the laundry bag.

“Go to our form-room,” said Miss Lesley, “and see if you can find my bottle of red ink. I may have left it on the mantelpiece. I want you to underline some words for me in red—lines in the play we’re doing.”

Feeling really exasperated Susan went to her form-room and looked for the red ink. It wasn’t on the mantelpiece. She looked on the window-sill. It wasn’t there either. Blow Miss Lesley—why couldn’t she remember where she put things?

Perhaps it was on her desk. Susan went to the big desk and looked. Yes, there it was. She picked it up. And then her eye fell on something, and she stood quite still.



The exam papers were there for the next day!

The exam papers were there for the next day! They lay in a neat pile. The history questions were on top. Question 1. What do you know of . . . Question 2. Write an essay about the . . . Question 3. Give a short account of . . .

Susan gave a little gasp. She rubbed her hand across her forehead and thought quickly. The exam questions were actually there, under her nose! She could read every single one of them.

“But it would be cheating,” she whispered to herself. “I should be a cheat. I never have cheated, never, though I’ve often wanted to.”

Yes, she had often wanted to. Perhaps other girls had too? But they all were so very, very scornful of cheating. It couldn’t have been a temptation to them, as it sometimes had been to Susan.

She set the red ink down on the desk and went to the window, so that if anyone came in she could be right away from the desk, pretending to look for the red ink. She had to think, think, think.

“I’ve never cheated. Never. I oughtn’t to begin. Mother says once you begin a wrong thing it’s much easier to do it next time, and then you just slide down and down. If I read those questions I *shall* be a cheat. It’s no good deceiving myself. I *shall* be a cheat.”

She pressed her forehead against the cold glass. She did need that scholarship so very badly.

“None of the others do. They’ll go to college anyhow. I shan’t. Mother couldn’t afford it. And I’ve got such good brains, I don’t want to waste them.”

Somebody came up the corridor, humming. Susan began to pretend to hunt around for the ink. She half hoped that whoever it was coming along would come into the classroom—then she couldn’t possibly cheat. Her mind would be made up for her. She couldn’t cheat with somebody else there.

But the person passed by the classroom and went up the stairs. Susan’s cheeks began to feel very hot, and her hands trembled as she still pretended to hunt for the ink. Then she went to the door and looked up and down the long corridor.

There was nobody about at all. If she didn’t make up her mind quickly Miss Lesley would send somebody after her—she might even think that Susan had found the exam papers and was reading them!

Susan went back to the desk. She picked up the exam papers one after another and read them through. She read the geography questions, the history, the maths, the literature, every single one of them.

“Some of these questions aren’t fair!” she thought angrily. “They ought to keep to the things we’ve studied. What’s the use of asking a question about North West America when we didn’t take that in our work for the exam?”

She went to the door again. Still there was nobody about. Taking a pencil and a slip of paper from her desk Susan quickly jotted down a few of the questions to look up. Then she replaced the papers neatly in their exact

order, and went out, her face still flaming.

She hoped the cool air in the corridor would make her face less red. Miss Lesley must not notice anything queer about her. She walked into the common-room, where all the others were talking noisily.

Miss Lesley was not there! "She's gone to Matron," said Pam. "Matron didn't give you half the things she ought to have done."

Susan was thankful Miss Lesley could not see her flaming face. She set the bottle of ink down on the table and then went out of the room. She wanted to bathe her face and cool it down. And she wanted to think how she could look up all the answers to those questions.

In the bathroom a thought kept trying to rise up to the surface. "I'm a cheat. I've done it at last. I've cheated." But she forced down the unwelcome thought and began to plan how she might get hold of some books and do a little looking up.

When she went back to the common-room Miss Lesley was back. She glanced at Susan and smiled. "You found the ink then. Thank you. Look, here are the lines I want marked—all those with a cross beside them."

Susan sat down with the red ink. It was plainly no use hoping to do any work with Miss Lesley there. She must smuggle her books up to bed, take out her torch, and work in bed.

She managed to smuggle the books upstairs before the girls went up to bed. She put them under her pillow. She found her torch and put that there too.

"Ooooh! The exam begins to-morrow," said Pam, as she undressed. "I'm shaking with nerves, girls."

Everyone laughed except Susan. "You're looking rather mouldy, Sue—anything up?" asked Pam.

"No," said Susan. "Just a bit tired, that's all."

"Well, don't worry about the exam," said Mollie. "You'll probably be top anyhow. I heard Miss Lesley say so. She said your work's better than anyone's, and she doesn't see how you can *fail* to be top. So there's a nice little tit-bit for you to sleep on, Susan!"



She managed to smuggle the books upstairs . . .

"Thank you, Mollie," said Susan. She was surprised. Was her work really as good as all that? It was true she was nearly always top of the weekly form marks. But exams were so different from ordinary weekly work. Suppose she might have been top of the scholarship exam anyhow, suppose she could have won it without cheating? But now she would never know. She had cheated. She knew the questions. Even if she didn't look up the answers, she could go over and over the questions in her mind and take her time in remembering the answers.

Everyone got into bed. Lights were switched off. Miss Lesley put her head in. "Not a word to be spoken to-night," she said. "Sleep well, and you'll do some marvellous papers to-morrow!"

“Goodnight, Miss Lesley,” said the girls, and settled themselves to sleep. All except Susan. She was going to wait until everyone was asleep, and then she meant to put on her torch, get out her books, and read them under the sheets by the light of the torch. She would look up the answers to every single question. Whether she could or could not win the scholarship without cheating she didn’t know—but certainly she would win it if she could—and cheating would make it absolutely certain.

When she was sure that everyone was asleep Susan cautiously pulled the sheet over her head. She put on her torch, and pulled the books down from under her pillow. She opened her geography book first.

She worked hard. She looked up the answer to every question in the exam papers. Then, her head aching and her eyes burning, she put out her torch, and tried to go to sleep.

But she couldn’t. A curious little voice began in her mind. “Susan’s a cheat! Isn’t it dreadful? I thought she was such a nice girl, didn’t you? Well, she’s not, she’s a cheat. Do you know her mother? Whatever would she say if she knew that Susan cheated?”

At once a picture of her mother slid into Susan’s mind. Her mother was not pretty at all, but she had a kind sweet face that lighted up when she smiled. But she was not smiling now. She was crying.

“I’m being silly and imagining things,” thought Susan, crossly. “I really must go to sleep.” But the little voice began again. “Susan’s a cheat! Isn’t it awful? She’s probably *always* been a cheat!”

But Susan interrupted the small voice at once. “I haven’t, I haven’t. It was only to-night—for the very first time . . . I’ll never, never do it again.”

“Yes, you will,” went on the small voice. It was a very determined little voice. “You will! It’s the first time that matters. After that it’s easy to do it again and again. Then you’ll be found out—and your good name will be gone—and perhaps one day you might even go to prison for dishonesty of some sort. Once you begin this sort of thing you slide down and down . . . and down . . . and down . . .”



Susan gave a groan and sat suddenly up in bed.

Susan gave a groan and sat suddenly up in bed, feeling cold and shivery. What had she done? Yes, cheated for the first time—but it wasn’t going to stop there—it never did. Why had she started? She’d been strong enough not to for years and years. And now, just those two minutes in the form-room had made her into a cheat.

“I wish I hadn’t! I’d give anything now not to have done it. What was I *thinking* of, to let myself do such a thing—with a mother like mine too, who has always shown me the right things to do. I’ll never be able to look her in the face again. I’ve spoilt everything, absolutely everything. I shall hate myself for ever and ever.”

She lay down again, and tears began to trickle over her pillow. She couldn’t undo what she had done now. She knew the answers to all the exam questions. Whatever she did she would not be able to win the scholarship fairly. If she confessed, she wouldn’t be able to go in for the exam, and the Head would despise her terribly and perhaps

expel her. Perhaps she could answer the questions wrongly and stupidly? Then she would be bottom, and her mother would be grieved and puzzled. All the girls would laugh.

"If I could only be given another chance!" thought Susan, wildly. "I'd never cheat again. But there isn't any other chance I can have—there's nothing to be done. Either I go on with the cheating and win the scholarship—or I confess and lose it—or I answer the questions wrongly and lose it. I've got no other choice. Oh, why did I do it?"

She got out of bed and went to the window. The moon was shining brightly. She heard a movement near her and saw that Janet, one of the girls she had thought was asleep, was awake.

"What's the matter, Susan? Aren't you well?" asked Janet, sleepily.

"Oh, Janet—something awful's happened to me," said Susan, and stopped in horror. She hadn't meant to say that—especially not to Janet, of all people. Janet was religious and good, and would think her simply dreadful if she said any more.

"What?" asked Janet, and sat up. "Why, you're crying, Sue. What's the matter, old thing?"

There was such kindness in Janet's voice that Susan couldn't stop herself from saying a great deal more, and soon she had poured everything out to Janet.

Janet listened without a word.

"There," said Susan, at last. "Now what do you think of me? And whatever can I do? I'm caught. I *might* have won the scholarship fairly—but now either I win it by cheating, or I lose it because I can't bear to cheat after all. I know I oughtn't to go in for it, because I know the answers."

Janet was horrified to hear this story poured out to her. She had never thought that Susan could cheat. She took her cold hand.

"I don't believe you *are* really a cheat," she said. "You were tired and did something you wouldn't do in the ordinary way. But honestly I don't see any way out for you, poor Sue. You're caught in a trap!"

"Oh Janet—it's frightful," said Susan. "What would *you* do in my place?"

"It's no good telling you that," said Janet. "You'd laugh."

"I shouldn't," said Susan. "I never felt less like laughing in my life."

"Well then—I'd go into the school chapel, and I'd jolly well kneel down and ask for help," said Janet. "I'd beg for another chance."

"But what would be the use of that?" asked Susan. "You can see there's nothing that would help me—and I can't possibly get another chance. I've done for myself."

"Well, either you believe or you don't," said Janet, settling down. "I told you it wouldn't be any good my telling you what I'd do."

"Oh Janet—I'll do it, I will," said Susan. "I might feel a bit happier perhaps. I do despise myself so dreadfully now."

"Well, hurry up and get back to bed," said Janet. "You're shivering."

But before she went back to bed Susan did go down to the school chapel. She put on her dressing-gown and stole down quietly. The little chapel looked lovely, full of moonlight. It was where the school went to hear the services every Sunday. Susan was used to gabbling the Lord's Prayer there, without thinking. She was often bored listening to the sermons.

But to-night was different. She thought hard about every word she said. "What I want is a miracle," she thought, sadly. "A miracle that would put everything right and give me another chance. Oh, help me, and give me another chance if it's possible."

Then, still shivering, she went back to bed, a little comforted. She fell asleep and did not wake till the dressing-bell clanged loudly.

It was a miserable Susan that dressed and went down to a breakfast she could hardly eat. Janet glanced at her anxiously, but Susan would not look at her. She felt sure that Janet must be disgusted with her.

Prayers. Roll call. Take your places. The exam papers will be given out. Susan felt as if things were happening to her in a dream. Now—she must make up her mind what she was going to do—answer the questions rightly or wrongly. A miracle had not happened, and anyway she didn't deserve that it should.

She would answer all the questions wrongly. That was the only thing to do. She would lose the scholarship, get into disgrace and grieve her mother. But it couldn't be helped. It was the only decent thing to do. Susan's heart felt much lighter when she had made this decision.

Pam was giving out the exam papers—geography—history—maths—all of which were to be done that morning. Everyone began to study them, with sighs and groans. Miss Lesley tapped on her desk.

“Girls! You may begin. You will have three quarters of an hour for each paper. Read the questions carefully before you begin.”

Susan looked at the geography paper. Then she frowned and looked again. Was this the *right* paper? The questions were quite different from the ones she had read in the pile of papers the evening before. Quite different!

Susan read down them quickly. Then she turned to the history paper.

Why, this was quite different too—and so were the maths questions. What had happened? Susan gazed round in bewilderment. Everyone had begun writing.

She looked at the papers again. It was odd, very, very odd. Not a single question was the same. And yet, stamped across the top were the words “Form III, Exam. Papers.”

A girl came into the room and spoke to Miss Lesley. “Please, Miss Lesley, may I have the exam papers for Form IV? Miss Robinson says she thinks she must have left them in your room yesterday.”

“Ah—here they are,” said Miss Lesley, and picked up a little pile. “Yes—Form IV. Funny I didn’t notice them. They must have been here all night! I kept Form III’s under lock and key.”

Susan sat back, feeling suddenly out of breath. She could hardly believe what had happened! Why—the papers she had read belonged to *Form IV*—not to her form at all! Her own exam papers had been safely locked up. She hadn’t seen them. She hadn’t seen *any* of the questions she was supposed to answer.

She had made a mistake. She had tried to be a cheat, but she wasn’t. It wasn’t exactly a miracle that had happened, but it seemed just like one to Susan. She had got another chance after all. She could answer the questions in front of her quite honestly. She needn’t cheat, she needn’t lose the scholarship.

“I asked for help and I asked for another chance, and I got both,” thought Susan, happily. She felt a different girl. She took up her pen and began to write feverishly. She knew all the answers! She could do the papers well.

She went to find Janet afterwards and told her what had happened. Janet was glad. Her kind face glowed.

“Well—you’ve got the second chance you wanted,” she said. “Good luck to you!”

“I’ve had a dreadful lesson,” said Susan. “I know what it’s like to be a cheat and to feel like one—and I never want to be one again. I wasn’t really one, as things turned out—but I meant to be. I don’t really deserve a second chance.”

“You *did* deserve one, or you wouldn’t have got it,” said Janet. “Well—I hope you win the scholarship!”

A Night on Thunder Rock



“Daddy, we’ve got something to ask you,” said Robert. “We do hope you’ll say ‘yes!’”

“Well, I’m not promising till I know what it is,” said Daddy, cautiously. “I’ve been caught that way before!”

“It’s something quite simple,” said Rita.

“Yes, something you’d love to do yourself,” said Fred. “It’s this—*can* we spend a night on Thunder Rock?”

Thunder Rock was a tiny rocky island not far out from the coast. The three children had a small boat of their own, and were used to rowing about by themselves. They had often rowed to Thunder Rock and had a picnic there.

“So now you want to spend a *night* there,” said their father. “Well, what does your mother say?”

“She says we must ask *you*,” said Robert. “Say ‘yes,’ Daddy. Only just one night. It would be such fun to camp out there all by ourselves.”

“We’d take rugs and things,” said Rita. “We’d choose a very fine warm night. It would be heavenly to go off to sleep at night with the waves beating on the rocks round us, and the stars blinking above us.”

“And waking up in the morning with the sun, and slipping into the water first thing for a bathe,” said Fred. “Come on, Dad—say ‘yes’.”

“Well, what about that old boat of yours?” said his father. “I heard it was leaking. Is it safe?”

“Pretty safe, because we can always bale out the water,” said Rita. “We don’t mind. Anyway we can all swim. But I don’t think the poor old boat will last much longer, Daddy. Are new boats very expensive?”

“Very,” said her father. “No hope of getting one, so don’t make plans. You’ll have to make the leaky old tub do for some time—but mind, if it gets too bad we’ll have to scrap it. No good running into danger, and you never know.”

“Well—can we go to Thunder Rock for the night?” asked Fred. “You haven’t said yet.”

His father smiled. “All right—you can go. Take your food with you, and rugs and things. You’ll be all right. It *is* fun to camp out on a little island like that. You feel so very much all on your own.”

“Oh, *thanks*, Daddy! We never thought you’d say ‘yes!’”

In delight the three children rushed off to their mother to tell her. “Well, I do hope you’ll all be all right,” she said. “You’re old enough to look after yourselves now—Robert is fourteen and very strong. Don’t get up to any silly tricks though. And be sure that old tub of yours doesn’t leak too much.”

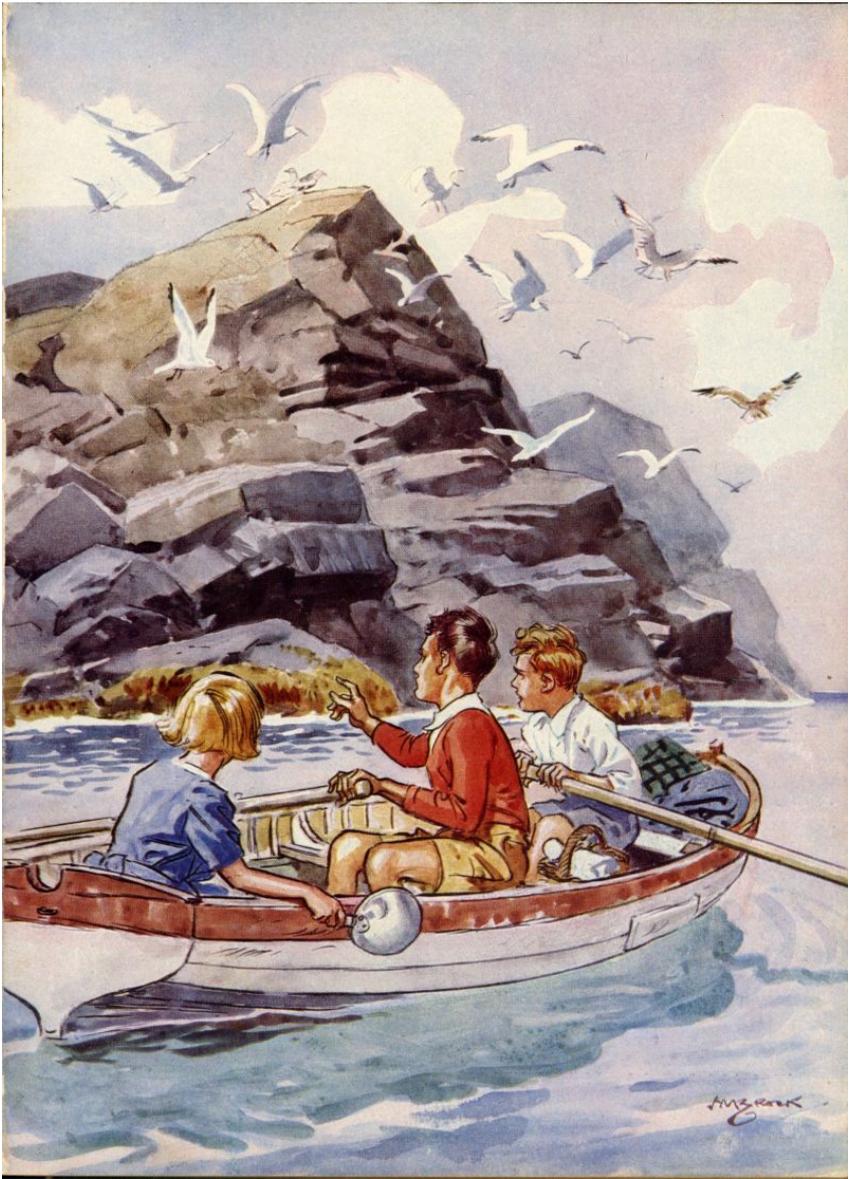
The children said nothing about their boat. She really was leaking very badly, and needed a lot of baling to keep her from sinking lower and lower! But if only she would last till they had had their night on Thunder Rock!

They made all their plans. Rita fetched a pile of old rugs and old coats. Fred went to ask Cook for a few tins of meat and fruit to take with them, and some ginger beer. Robert went to get the boat ready. They planned to set off that evening, have a picnic supper, a swim in the sun-warmed water, and then a lovely talk lying on the rugs, looking up to the starry sky.

“It will be gorgeous hearing the waves lapping round all the time,” said Robert. “Fancy being all by ourselves like that, too. Nobody to send us here and there, nobody to ask what we’re up to, nobody to say we’re making too much noise!”

They said goodbye and set off in the boat. Everything had been piled in. Had they forgotten anything? No, they didn’t think so. Robert and Fred pulled at the oars and Rita baled hard. “Blow this leak! It’s getting worse. I honestly don’t think the poor old tub will last much longer.”

“Well, Ted, the fisherman, says she’s too old to mend,” said Robert, pulling hard. “Say when you’re tired of baling, Rita, and I’ll have a turn and you can row.” Gulls cried loudly all round them. The sea was very calm, and only a slight swell lifted the boat now and again. The sun shone from the western sky, and the water gleamed blue and purple and green. Lovely!





They got to Thunder Rock at last. They pulled the boat into a tiny cove, out of reach of the waves. Rita took out the rugs and old coats and spread them on a sandy place between some high rocks.

"We'll be well sheltered here," she said. "And the sand is warm and soft. Won't it be gorgeous sleeping out here? Now what about supper?"

Supper was lovely. Tinned salmon, tinned pineapple, new bread and butter, chocolate and ginger beer. "Better than any meal on a table!" said Fred. "Now let's have a look round Thunder Rock and then have a bathe when our supper's settled a bit."

Thunder Rock was a queer little island. It was nothing but rocks and coves. Nothing grew on it at all, except seaweed. The sea-birds came to it, and liked to stand on the highest rocks, gazing out to sea. They fluttered away a little when the children came near to them, but did not fly right off.

“Lovely things!” said Rita, watching a big gull alight. “I wouldn’t mind being a gull—swimming, flying, paddling, gliding, diving—what a nice life!”

They had their bathe and then lay on their rugs in the twilight, warm and glowing. They put on pyjamas, and then Fred yawned. “Golly, are you sleepy already?” said Rita. “I’m not. I want to enjoy every minute of this exciting evening. Don’t let’s go to sleep yet.”

“Of course we won’t,” said Robert, nibbling a bar of chocolate. “The sun’s quite gone now. There’s not a single bit of pink cloud left in the sky. But it’s still very warm.”

“The waves sound nice, splashing all round Thunder Rock,” said Rita, looking sleepy. They went on talking for a while, and then Fred gave another yawn, a most enormous one this time.

“I really don’t believe I can keep awake,” he said. “I do want to, but my eyes keep closing. I bet we’ll sleep well to-night—with nothing whatever to disturb us except the sound of the sea!”

“All right. We’ll say goodnight then,” said Rita. “I feel sleepy, too. I’m going to fix my eyes on that bright star over there and see how long I can keep awake. It’s so lovely out here all alone on Thunder Rock.”

It was not long before they were all asleep. The stars shone in the sky, and the sea splashed quietly on the rocks. There was no other sound to be heard.

But wait a minute—was there no other sound? Robert suddenly woke up with a jump. He lay there for a moment, wondering where he was. How queer to see the sky above him instead of the ceiling of his bedroom! Then he remembered—of course—he was on Thunder Rock. Good!

He was just about to go to sleep again when he heard the sound that had awakened him. It was an extra loud splash—and then another and another. Regular splashes.

Robert sat up. It sounded like a boat being rowed along, not far from Thunder Rock!

Then he heard low voices. That made him stiffen to attention even more. A boat near Thunder Rock—and voices in the middle of the night. What did it mean?

Cautiously Robert awoke Fred and whispered in his ear. “Don’t make a row. There’s a boat being rowed to Thunder Rock. I can hear it—and voices too.”

The boys sat and listened. But the boat did not come to Thunder Rock after all. It went right round it and the voices died away. The splash of the oars could no longer be heard.

“The boat’s on the landward side of the rock now,” whispered Robert. “Let’s go round and see if we can spot it. There’s only star-light to see by but we might just make it out.”

They walked cautiously over the rocks, and round to the other side of the little island. They could see a dark mass some way off—that must be the boat! But who was in it—and why come rowing over the sea at this time of night? Where to? And where from?

“It’s all jolly mysterious,” said Robert. “Now let’s think. Where is that boat heading for?”

“It’s going towards the rocky cliffs of the mainland,” said Fred. “I should think towards the part that is always washed by the sea—the part we’ve never been able to explore properly because you can’t get round to it.”

“There might be caves there,” said Robert. “I wonder where the boat came from, though. It seemed to come from out at sea—and yet it was only rowed.”

“Do you know—I bet that boat came from some motor launch some way out,” said Fred, suddenly. “They wouldn’t dare to bring it right in, if they were doing anything they shouldn’t, because the motor would be heard. I bet the boat left the launch right out to sea—and was rowed in quietly, with some kind of goods. Probably they’ve come from France.”

“Do you mean *smuggled* goods?” said Robert in sudden excitement. “My word—smugglers!”

“Well, you know there are plenty of smugglers to-day, now that things are expensive and difficult to get,” said Fred. “We’ve heard Mother talking about it with Daddy, I bet you anything you like we’ve just heard a boat-load of smugglers passing, with smuggled goods in the boat—and they’re heading for the cliffs, where they’ve either got a hiding-place or friends to take the goods from them!”



The boys sat and listened.

Robert whistled. He gazed towards the dark land, which could be faintly seen as a black blur in the starlit night. "Yes. You may be right. Smugglers! I say, what are we going to do about it?"

"Let's go and wake Rita," said Fred. "We can talk about it then, all together. My word, I feel wide awake now, don't you?"

Rita was very excited when she heard the boys' news. "You might have wakened me before," she said indignantly. "Do you suppose the smugglers' boat will come back?"

"Well—yes—I suppose it may," said Robert. "I hadn't thought of that. We'd better keep a look-out."

They all went round to the other side of the little island, and strained their eyes towards the distant cliffs. Then Robert gave an exclamation.

"Look—I'm sure I can see a light—it must be at the bottom of the cliffs, I should think."

They all stared hard, and soon Rita and Fred could see a faint light, too.

"I bet that's where the smugglers are, with their goods!" said Robert.

They sat and watched and talked for a long time. The light disappeared. Then suddenly Robert's sharp ears heard something and he clutched Rita and Fred, making them jump.

"They're coming back! Sh!"

And then there came the sound of oars again, and a murmur of voices. The boat passed in the darkness, a blur against the water. The children hardly dared to breathe.

They began to whisper when the boat was out of hearing.

"They must have put the goods in a cave! Let's go to-morrow and find out!"

"Sh! Listen! I believe I can hear a motor starting up a good way out. I bet the smugglers are off back to France!"

"I wish daylight would come. I want to go off and hunt for the smuggled goods!"

But day did not come. It was still only the middle of the night and the children fell asleep again and could hardly believe, in the morning, that anything had happened in the night.

"But it must have, because we all know about it!" said Rita. "So it can't have been a dream. Let's have breakfast and then go and explore those cliffs. We can row quite near to them."

So after a meal they set off in their leaky old boat. They rowed towards the towering, rocky cliffs, round whose base the sea washed continually. They came nearer and nearer, and then, when they were afraid of going on the rocks, they rowed round the cliffs, examining every foot of them as carefully as they could.

And they found what they were looking for! They came suddenly to a cleft in the cliff, and guided their boat carefully towards it. A wave took them into the curious crack and they found themselves in an enclosed channel, walled in by steep cliffs, with not much more room than the boat needed for itself.

On one side of the channel was a cave, running into the cliff, quite hidden from the sea outside. "You hold the boat steady by hanging on to this rock, Fred, and I'll have a look into the cave," said Robert. He leapt from the



They strained their eyes towards the distant cliffs.

boat on to a rock and then peered into the cave. He gave a yell.

"I say! Stacks of things! Boxes and packages of all kinds. This is where those smugglers put their things. I bet someone on the mainland collects them when it's safe to do so—probably by boat."

He went back to the boat and got in. "I'd like to undo some of those things," he said. "But I suppose I'd better not. It's a matter for the police now."

"Is it really?" said Rita, looking rather scared. "Well, come on, then. Let's get back home."

They shoved the boat down through the cleft of the cliff back to the open sea again. Robert and Fred took the oars. Fred gave a shout of dismay.

"I say! You'll have to bale like fury, Rita, the boat's awfully full of water. We'll be swimming soon! Get the baler, quick."

Certainly the boat was leaking worse than ever. Rita began to bale quickly. The boys rowed hard. But the boat was heavy now with water, and it was difficult going. In the end the boys had to stop rowing and help Rita with the baling.

When they had got the boat a good bit lighter, they took the oars again. "You'll have to buck up," said Rita, anxiously. "It'll fill again directly. It must have sprung another leak. I hope we get back before it fills and sinks!"

The boat began to fill quickly again. The boys rowed hard. Just before they got to shore the boat

quietly began to sink beneath them!

They had to get out and wade to shore, carrying what they could of their goods. "That's very bad luck," said Robert, sadly. "I liked that old boat. I'm afraid she's done for now. Come on, let's go home and tell Mother what's happened. Then she can ring up the police."

Mother was amazed at all they had to tell. She was horrified about the boat, and very glad they had got home safely, though they were very wet.

"I can hardly believe this tale of smugglers," she said. "But I suppose I'd better ring up the police. I'll do it now, whilst you go and put on dry things."

It wasn't long before an Inspector of Police was round in his car. He listened with the greatest interest to all that the children told him.

"I expect they've really hit on something," he told their mother. "We know smuggling is going on all round the coast. But it's difficult to trace. I'll get a boat and go round to this cave. Perhaps I could take the children's boat and they could direct me to the place."

"It's sunk," said Fred, sorrowfully. "We haven't got a boat! We feel very upset about it. Ted, the fisherman, will lend you his. We'll come too."

The Inspector found that the goods in the cave were most certainly smuggled. "Silk stockings! Bottles of brandy! Perfume of all kinds! My word, this is a haul!" he said in delight. "Well, we'll remove all these goods to-night when nobody is likely to see us, and then we'll set a watch for the smugglers' friends, whoever they are. They are sure to come to fetch the goods soon. And we will also put somebody on Thunder Rock, lying in wait for the smugglers when they come again, as they are sure to do."

It all sounded very exciting indeed. The children wanted to go to Thunder Rock with the watchers, but the Inspector said "no." "There may be danger—shooting, for instance," he said. "You're better out of things like that. I'll let you know what happens, never fear!"

He kept his word, and brought them a very exciting story the next week. "We've got the men who receive the goods," he began. "We caught them rowing round to the cave to fetch them. And now we've got the smugglers too! Three of them!"



They rowed towards the towering, rocky cliffs.

“Did you catch them in their boat?” asked Rita.

“We followed their boat when it went back to the open sea,” said the Inspector. “And there, sure enough was a smart little motor launch waiting for them. We got the whole lot—so *that* spot of smuggling is stopped for a little while at any rate.”

“What a good thing we went to spend the night on Thunder Rock!” said Fred. “Jolly bad luck our boat is gone, though.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t worry about that,” said the Inspector, in an airy voice. “We want to give you a reward for your help—you’ll find it in Ted the fisherman’s charge if you care to go and look!”

The children tore down to the beach, and found Ted there, grinning. Beside his boat lay another one, newly-painted and smart.

“Good morning to you,” said Ted. “Come to have a look at your new boat? Smart, isn’t she? My word, you’re lucky children, aren’t you?”

“We *are*!” said Rita, in delight. “Bags I row her first! Oh, what a beauty. Come on, boys—haul her down the beach. Off we go!”

And off they went, bobbing lightly up and down on the waves. They rowed to Thunder Rock, pulled the boat up on the sand and lay down in the sun.

“Good old Thunder Rock!” said Fred, banging the sand below him with his open hand. “If it hadn’t been for you we’d never have got that marvellous—wonderful—super—new boat!”



No. 2. MISS HANNAH'S DOLLS

Jack had gone out to tea. The two girls, Jane and Lucy, were alone and bored.

"Let's ask Miss Hannah to come and show us how to make something," said Lucy. "I'd like some dolls to dress."

"All right," said Jane, and went to find Miss Hannah. She looked pleased.

"Oh, would you really like me to come?" she said. "And you want dolls to dress, do you? Well, that's easy!"

Soon they were all three sitting round the table. "We just want scissors, stiff paper and crayons or paint-box," said Miss Hannah. "We'll make a doll family. I'll make a doll called Susan."

"And I'll make Elsie," said Jane.

"And I'll make Kathie," said Lucy. "What are you doing, Miss Hannah?"

Miss Hannah was drawing something. You can see what it was—a doll ready to be dressed—but she only drew half the doll, and her paper was folded over. "I'll do Lucy's," she said, "but you must copy this yourself, Jane, on your folded-over piece of paper."

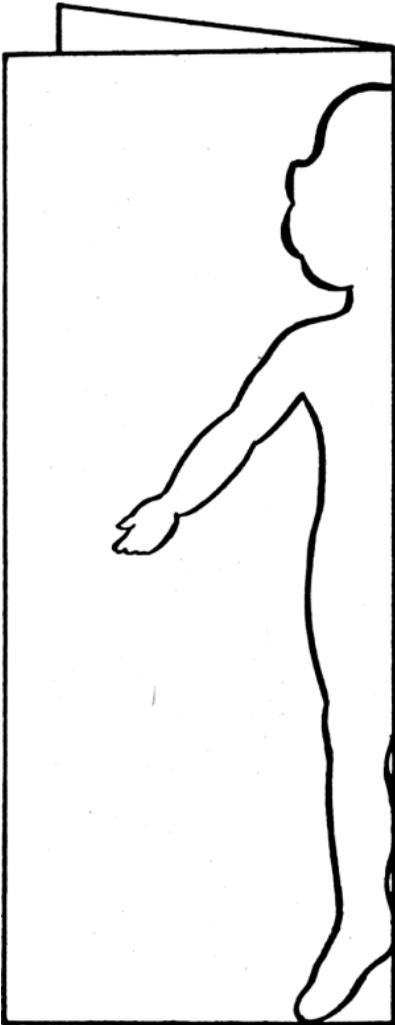
Well, of course, once the half-doll was drawn, it was easy to cut it out from the folded paper—and lo and behold, it was a whole doll when it was unfolded! It didn't take long to draw and paint a face, hair, socks and shoes.

"Now for some dresses," said Miss Hannah. "Look, I've got some old pieces of wall-paper here, with pretty patterns on. We can cut out our dolls' dresses from that. Choose a piece, each of you."

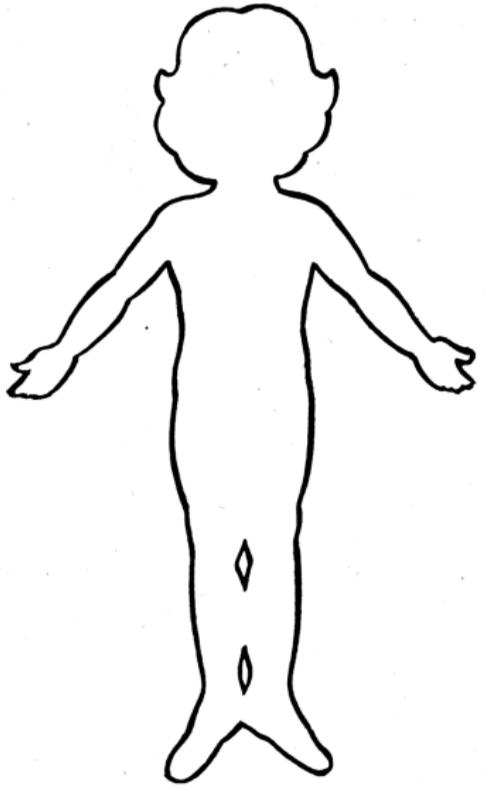
Jane and Lucy each chose a gay piece. "Now fold your piece into *four*," said Miss Hannah. "Put the folded piece up against your doll. If it's too long for a dress, cut a piece from the bottom. Now, are we ready? You must now draw your dresses. Watch me. You only want to draw *half* a dress, just as you drew half a doll. The folding will make it into a whole dress."

She drew the shape of the dress, just as you see it in the picture on page 80. Lucy and Jane copied her. "Now your scissors," said Miss Hannah, "and we'll cut out our dresses carefully. Remember the hole for the neck."

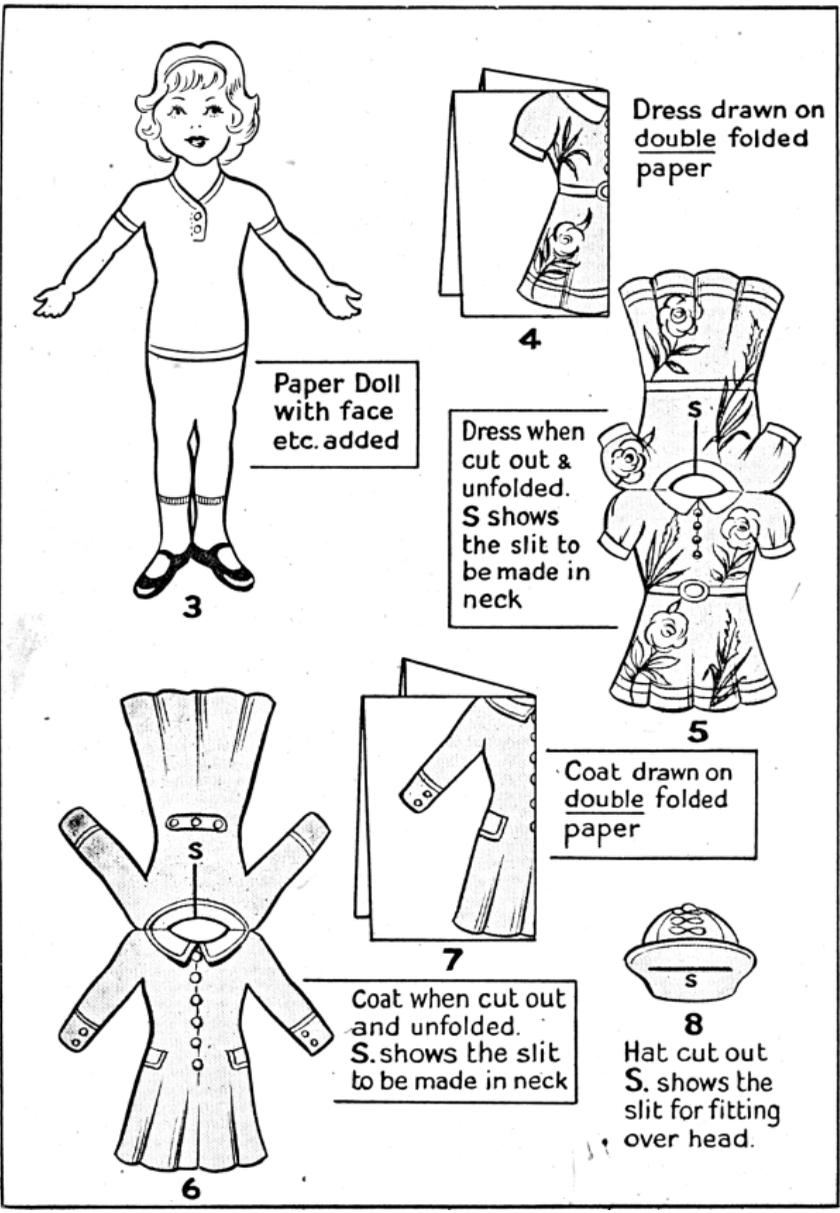
They cut out what they had drawn, and then unfolded the dress. It had a back and a front, as you can see. Miss Hannah showed them how to make a little cut down the back of the neck, so that the dress could be slipped easily over the doll's head. You can see the "S" for the slit, marked on the drawing.



Paper doll drawn on folded paper ready to cut.



Paper doll cut out whole.



Jane and Lucy could hardly wait to fit the dresses on! They slipped them over their dolls' heads and exclaimed in delight. "Elsie looks sweet!" said Jane.

"And Kathie looks lovely," said Lucy. "Oh quick, I want to make lots more dresses for her! And a coat. And hats!"

"Oh Miss Hannah—let's make a family of dolls and their clothes to give to the Children's Hospital," said Jane, suddenly. "The sick children could play for hours with them, and they would be so light to hold."

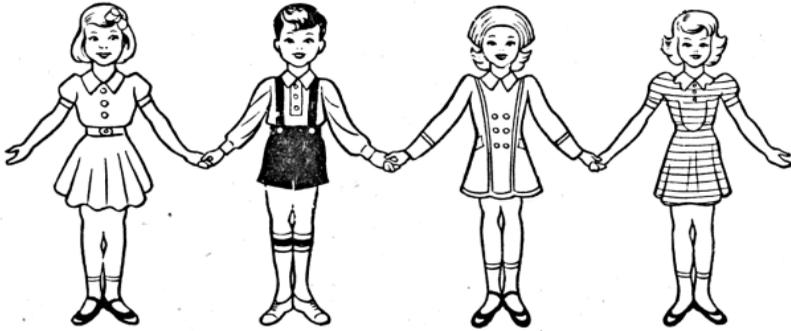
"A very good idea," said Miss Hannah. She showed them how to cut out short and long coats, and how to make hats with a little slit in to slip over the dolls' heads. They really had a very exciting time.

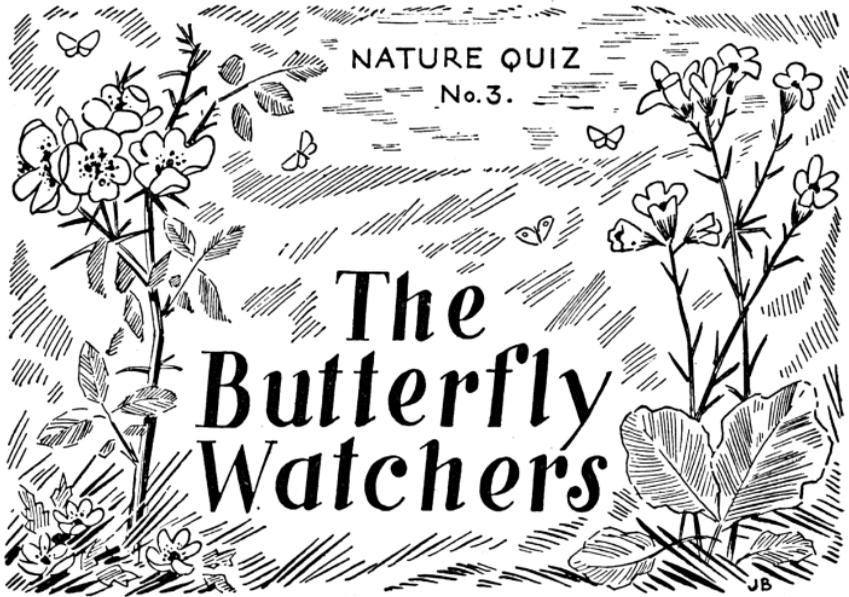
When Jack came home they showed him their doll family. “We knew you wouldn’t want to do this because it’s dolls,” said Jane. “But we did have fun. And we’re going to make a whole doll family for the Children’s Hospital.”

“I’ll help you!” said Jack. “I could make a boy-doll!”

So they set to work when they had time and made a fine doll-family, with all the clothes the dolls needed to wear. Some of them were made of gay wall-paper, but others were made of white paper and painted. Look at the doll-family—they’re really lovely, aren’t they!

(For the next Rainy Afternoon, see page [126](#).)





Summer had come, and the sun poured down hotly each day. Richard, Jack, Joan and Alice were burnt as brown as acorns, and spent their days in sun-suits.

One evening, when they were all lying in the sun, drying after a dip in the stream that ran at the bottom of their garden, Mrs. Robins brought her mending out to do.

"Lazy things," she said to them, as she sat down. "You look half asleep. I've a good mind to give you all something to think about, for a change."

"Oh *do!*" said Alice. "Give us another quiz, Mother. A butterfly one. Go on, begin! Choose the commonest butterflies and see who knows them. I bet I know most."

"Right," said her mother, and began to darn a sock. "Now—I'm thinking of a very pretty butterfly with white wings that. . . ."

"Cabbage White! Easy," said Richard at once, anxious to be first.

"Go to the bottom of the quiz class," said Mrs. Robins at once. "It has white wings and there are bright orange tips to the front ones."

"Orange-tip, Orange-tip!" said the girls at once. "There are heaps about. One up to us girls. You've been caught again, Richard!"

Richard grinned. "I know. Shan't be caught any more, though. Go on, Mrs. Robins."

"My next," said Mrs. Robins, "is a beauty. It has lovely red-brown wings, black underneath. It has curious eye-like spots on each of its four wings. . . ."

"Peacock butterfly, Peacock!" cried Jack at once. "It's got eye-spots like those on a peacock's tail. Easy."

"Yes, it has," said Mrs. Robins. "Now, here's a more difficult one—it's very, very common. It's dark brown with yellow markings on its front wings, and there's a black eye-spot near the tip, with a white centre."

"Dark brown," said Jack, thoughtfully. "Oh, *I* know, of course—we see heaps of them everywhere, but we don't take much notice of them because they're so ordinary. They're rather dull, after butterflies like Peacocks and Orange-tips."

"Well, you haven't told us the name yet," said his mother, laughing.

"It's so ordinary that I can't even think of its name," said Jack. "Let me see, it's Brown. . . ."

"Yes—Meadow Brown!" cried Alice, suddenly. "There's one over there. Meadow Brown, of course!"

"Good," said Mrs. Robins. "Now, here's one you all know. It's a most beautiful daffodil yellow, and. . . ."

“Brimstone, a Brimstone Yellow!” shouted Richard, almost deafening everyone in trying to get his answer in first. “They come out almost the first of any butterflies. I’ve seen them in March.”

“Yes, they sometimes hibernate, and then come out early, at the first touch of the spring sunshine,” said Mrs. Robins. “Now, here’s another that sometimes hibernates too. It’s large, red brown, spotted with black. At the bottom of the two back wings you will see a row of pretty blue spots. There’s a small kind, as well.”

“Oh yes—Large Tortoiseshell and Small Tortoiseshell!” said Jack, suddenly. “I’ve often noticed those pretty blue spots, Mother. They’re lovely.”

“Well, I don’t believe I *have* noticed them,” said Alice. “I must look next time. Another one, please, Mother. One *I* can guess!”

“Very well. What about this one?” said her mother. “It’s very common. The male is a lovely lilac-blue, but the female is brown-blue, and . . .”

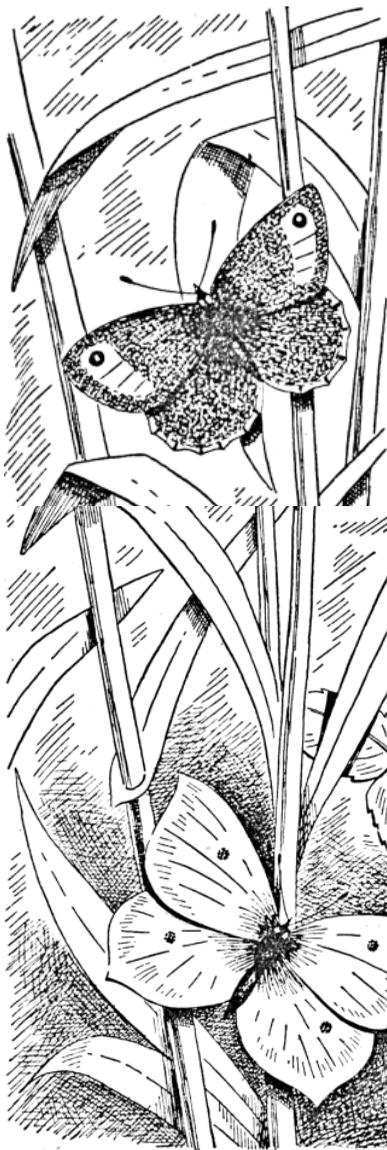
“Common Blue, Common Blue!” chanted everyone, Alice, too. And she added “There’s a Holly Blue, too, and a Chalk-Hill Blue, but I don’t know the difference. I shall look them up and find out, in case you put them all into a quiz!”

“And now,” said Mrs. Robins, “tell me this butterfly—it’s very pretty, and you’ll often find it sitting on a thistle head, spreading out its tawny orange wings. The front ones have black tips, spotted with white. The back ones are black-spotted.”



Alice looked at her mother. She was gazing at a flower, and on it was just such a butterfly as the one she had been describing. Alice looked at it closely. “I know! I know! It’s a Painted Lady!”

“Yes,” said her mother. Alice pointed it out to the others and said: “I saw you looking at it, so I knew. Isn’t it lovely?”



“Well, that’s not fair,” said Richard. “I should know any butterfly I was looking at!”

“Right,” said Mrs. Robins, and she pointed her needle to another butterfly fluttering about. “There’s one for you. Have a good look at it and tell me what it is.”

Richard looked hard at it. It settled most obligingly near him, on the warm stone of a low wall. “A dark brown,” said Richard, “with little black spots. Oh, it’s closing its wings right up.”

The butterfly shut its wings above its body. “It’s showing you the things that give it its name,” said Mrs. Robins. Everyone looked hard. On the under-side of the wings were many little dark circles, with white centres.

“Little ringlets,” said Alice, admiringly. Then she gave a cry. “Is that its name? The Ringlet butterfly? I’m sure I’ve heard of it.”

“Well done, Alice,” said Mrs. Robins, pleased. “You beat Richard there. Yes, it’s a Ringlet. It’s usually found in the woodlands, but this one must have flown along to show you what it was like.”

“One up to Alice,” said Richard. “Go on, Mrs. Robins. I’ll guess the next one.”

“Then it must be a very, very easy one,” said Mrs. Robins, smiling. “A white-winged butterfly with black spots, Richard.”

“Cabbage White,” said Richard, laughing. “I thought that would have to come soon. There are two cabbage butterflies,

aren’t there—a large and a small.”

“Yes, they are real pests,” said Mrs. Robins. “Their caterpillars ruin a patch of cabbage plants in no time. Now, here’s another. This is one of our very handsomest butterflies—a glossy black, streaked with brilliant scarlet, and spotted with pure white.”

“He belongs to the navy, doesn’t he?” said Richard, quickly. Everyone laughed.

“Yes,” said Jack. “The Red Admiral! I think he’s my favourite.”

“And now another lovely butterfly,” said his mother. “There are many kinds of this particular sort, but the one I am thinking of is very common. It’s a handsome, golden brown butterfly with black spots and streaks. The female has silver markings on the under-side of her wings.”

“Are you thinking of one of the Fritillaries, mother?” asked Jack. “They’re golden-brown, aren’t they—and isn’t there a Silver-Washed Fritillary? You said something about silver markings.”

JB

“You’re quite right, Jack,” said his mother, pleased. “One up to you. It was the Silver-Washed Fritillary I was thinking of—but I didn’t for a moment think anyone would guess it, though it’s quite a common butterfly. There are a lot of different kinds of fritillaries. One of the rarest is the Queen of Spain.”

“What a lovely name!” said Joan. “Now, we’ve had eleven, and managed to guess them all



between us, Mrs. Robins. One more please, to make the dozen.”

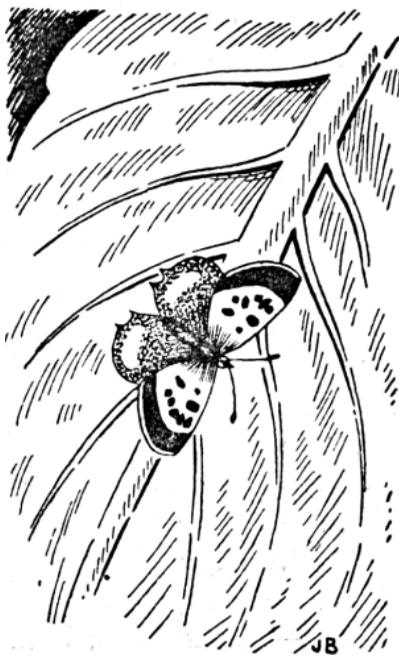
“Well—I’m thinking of a small butterfly,” said Mrs. Robins. “You’ll often see it flying with the little blue ones. It has coppery red front wings, marked with black, and dark brown hind wings which have a wide band of burnished coppery red along the edge.”

“You’ve given its name away!” said Jack, smiling. “It’s the Small Copper, isn’t it? It must be! At first I thought you might be going to describe the Heath butterfly, but I’m sure it’s the Small Copper.”

“Yes, it is,” said his mother. “Well, you haven’t done at all badly over butterflies. I’ll give you a moth quiz next.”

(You’ll find it on page [145](#).)







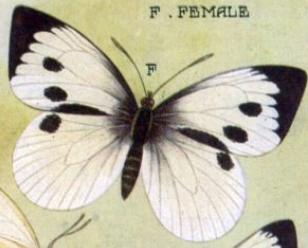
M. MALE
F. FEMALE



RED ADMIRAL



CHALKHILL BLUE



CABBAGE WHITE



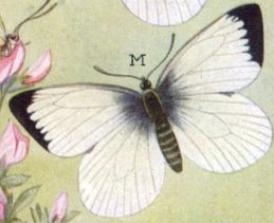
SMALL COPPER



CHALKHILL BLUE



CABBAGE WHITE



CABBAGE WHITE



SMALL COPPER



PAINTED LADY



COMMON BLUE



COMMON BLUE



SMALL WHITE



PAINTED LADY



COMMON BLUE



SMALL WHITE



RINGLET



RINGLET



PEACOCK

FRANZ SEL



BRIMSTONE

M. MALE
F. FEMALE

LARGE
TORTOISESHELL

HOLLY BLUE

QUEEN OF SPAIN
FRITILLARY

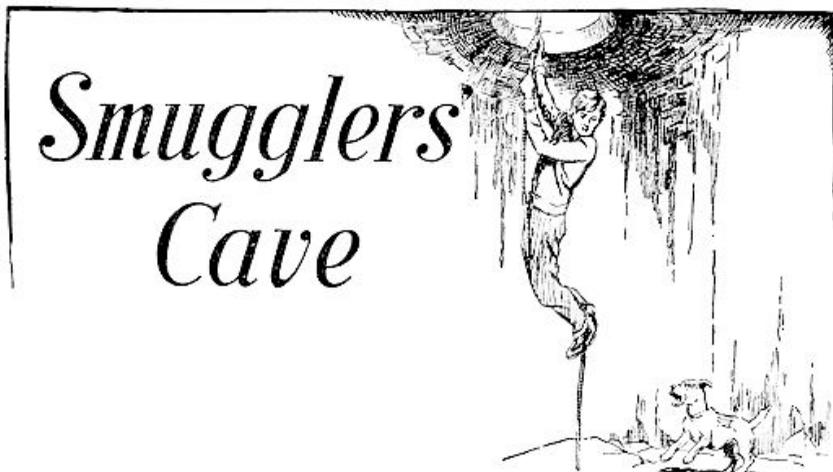
HEATH FRITILLARY

ORANGE-TIP

SMALL TORTOISESHELL

MEADOW BROWN

SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY



Ronnie, Susie and George were all feeling very sad. Not so much because they were going back to their boarding-schools in a few days, but because when they next broke up for the holidays, their lovely home, Grey Towers, would belong to someone else!

"*Why* can't we keep it for ourselves?" asked Susie. "Mother, it's been our home, and Daddy's home, and Grandpa's home, and even Great-Grandpa's home! Why have we got to leave? It ought to be our home too!"

"Well, dear, we're poor now," said her mother. "We can't afford to keep up a big place like this, even though it has belonged to us for three hundred years! Our family used to be rich, you know, in your great-great-grandfather's time. But then he offended a friend of the king of that day and he was stripped of all his money and the famous family jewels."

"*All* of them?" said Ronnie, who had heard this story before. "I thought, Mother, that great-great-grandpa hid some of his treasure."

"So the tale goes," said Mother. "But I'm afraid I don't believe that now, Ronnie. It would have been found long ago if it had been hidden. Anyway dozens of our family have looked for it and haven't found it."

"I've looked for it too," said George, the eldest. "I've looked everywhere. I thought there might be a secret panel or something somewhere Mother—that led to a hidden cupboard—but I never found anything!"

"And all because long ago one of our family offended somebody, we've got to leave the home we love, and go and live somewhere we'll hate!" said Ronnie.

"I do so love Grey Towers," said Susie. "Mother, I can't bear to think I'll never come home to it again. I shall go and say good-bye to every single bit of it before I go back to school."

"Yes, we'd better do that," said Ronnie. "We'll go into every room and every corner, so that we'll remember it always. Let's start now. Let's go up to the towers, and look out of the windows, so that we can see all the country round that we know so well."

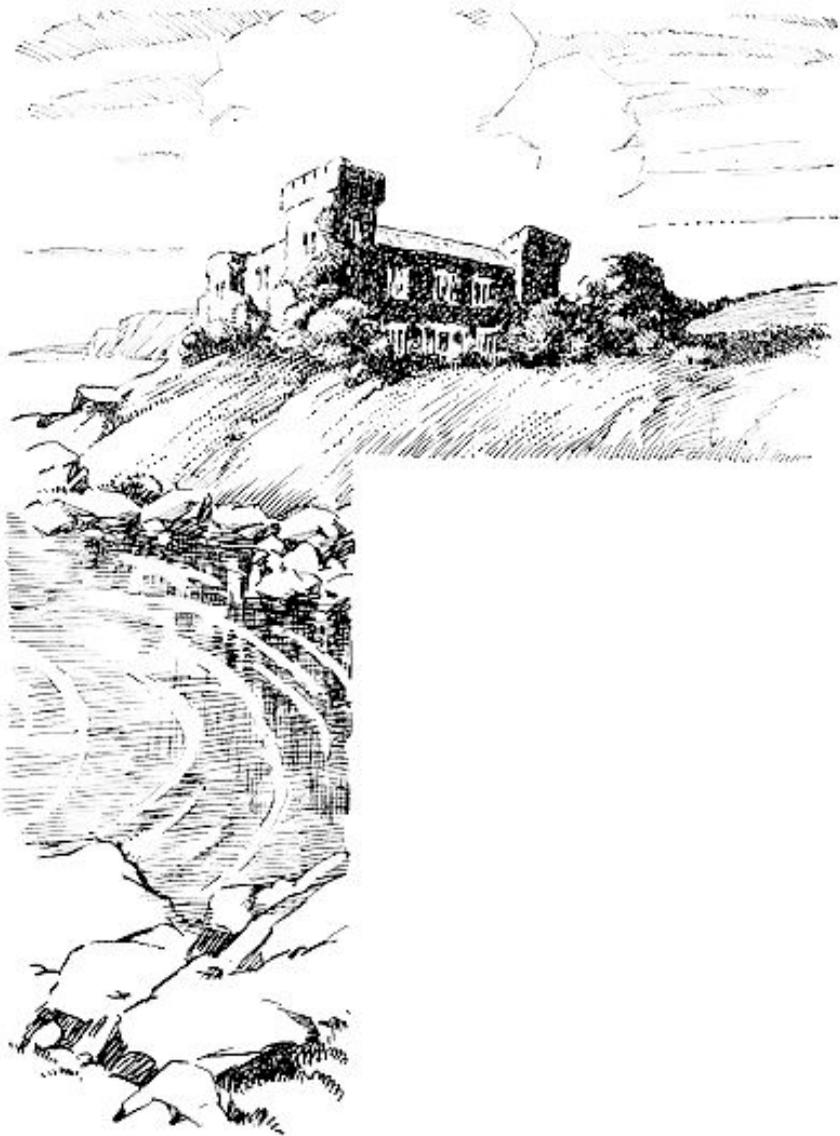
"Yes. And we'll even go down to the cellars, and say goodbye to those," said George. "Not that I've ever been very fond of them, but I'm not going to miss anything!"

"Well, we'll take Jumpy with us then," said Susie. "There might be rats there and I don't like them. Jumpy can chase them for us. He's a good dog for rats."

They began to say good-bye for the last time to all the places they loved so well—the rounded tower rooms at each end of the house—their own bedrooms, tucked into the roof—their big playroom with its magnificent view of the nearby sea—the long dark landing where they had often hidden to pounce at one another.

"We mustn't leave out anything," said Susie, dolefully. "We'll do the cellars last. Where's Jumpy?"

"Jumpy!" called George, when at last they were ready to go down into the dark cellars. "Jumpy! Come along! We want you to come down and chase RATS! RATS, boy, RATS!"



Grey Towers.

“And that’s about all we *shall* find down in those old cellars,” said Susie, with a shiver. And down the stone steps they went, with Jumpy leaping beside them.

The cellars were deep down under the house. They were dark, and smelt damp and musty. There was no electric light there, so the children had torches. Jumpy didn’t mind the dark at all. He rushed here and there, sniffing in every corner for rats.

Old barrels lined the walls. Empty bottles, thick with dust and cobwebs, stood on dark shelves. Wooden crates stood about. It was not a very pleasant place.

There were three or four cellars of different sizes. Nothing of any value was kept there now, because Mother said it was too damp to store things. So it wasn’t really a very interesting place after all.



Jumpy rushed here and there, sniffing in every corner for rats.

"I don't feel I mind saying good-bye to the cellars, really," said Susie, flashing her torch round. "I never liked them much. Ugh, is that a frog!"

"No—a rat! Hie, Jumpy, here's a RAT for you. Rat, quick!" yelled George. Jumpy raced up at once, his tail quivering in delight. The rat shot into the next cellar and Jumpy tore after him. The children followed, flashing their torches.

The rat ran round the cellar looking for a way of escape, but there was none there. It went into the last cellar of all, a place so hung with cobwebs that Susie stopped in dismay, feeling the webby fingers across her face.

"It's horrid here!" she said. "I won't go in!"

Jumpy chased the rat to a corner, where a big barrel stood. Then he scraped and whined loudly, trying to get beneath the barrel.

"The rat's found a way out somehow," said Ronnie, in disgust. "I wonder if it could have gone under this barrel. Help me to overturn it, George. That's right—over she goes! There, Jumpy, is the rat under it?"

No, it wasn't. But there was a dark hole there and Jumpy suddenly fell down it unexpectedly, disappearing with a loud yelp!



The boys shone their torches on the floor under the barrel they had overturned.

"Gracious! What's happened to Jumpy?" said Susie, in alarm. The boys shone their torches on the floor under the barrel they had overturned.

"There's a round hole there! Where *does* it lead to?" said George. "Look, it's had a wooden lid or something over it at one time—but it's rotted away. What a funny thing! Jumpy! Are you all right?"

A doleful wail came up. Jumpy was plainly not at all happy. He was frightened out of his life! The boys shone their torches down the hole. Far down they could see two green eyes gleaming up at them. It was poor Jumpy, looking up in despair.

"We'll get a rope and go down and get Jumpy up," said George. "What a funny pit! What can it be for? We'll go down and see, shall we? Maybe it was just a hiding-place for a smuggler!"

"Yes, that's it," said Ronnie. "We know that smuggling was carried on here ages ago. Fancy us never finding this old hole before. Come on—let's get a rope and rescue poor old Jumpy. What a row he's making!"

Soon the three children had found a rope and were back in the dark cellars. Jumpy was still howling mournfully, and the echoes of his doleful voice filled the cellars and made Susie shiver.

"I don't like it," she said. "Let's rescue Jumpy quickly and get back into the daylight again!"

"I'd better go down on the rope and tie Jumpy to it, and you must haul him up somehow," said George. "Then I'll come up on the rope myself. It's not very far down—only about eight feet I should think."

He let the rope down, after first tying it firmly to an iron hook in the wall. Then down he went, hand over hand to poor Jumpy. The dog was thrilled to see him and barked joyfully.

George stood at the bottom of the hole, and felt for Jumpy's collar. He meant to tie the rope round him in such a way that the others could haul him up without hurting him.

He switched on his torch—and then he gave a loud cry that made the others jump. "I say! It isn't just a hole! There's an opening here—it must lead into a passage! Gracious, how exciting!"

Ronnie and Susie almost fell down the hole in their excitement. What! An opening out of the hole? Where *could* it lead to?

"I'm coming down too!" shouted Ronnie and down he went, almost on top of George. Jumpy, happy now that the children were with him, had pranced out through the opening at the bottom. George shouted up to Susie.

"Wait a bit before you come down. Let me and Ronnie get into the opening, or you'll land on top of us. I'll shout when we're ready."

Susie waited till he shouted. Then down she went on the rope too, hand over hand, as she had been taught to do at gym.

She saw a small opening at one side of the wall of the hole. She had to bend down to get through it. The two boys were there, waiting, their torches switched on.

"It's a passage!" said Ronnie, excitedly. "See? There it goes, down and down! Shall we explore it?"



"It's a passage," said Ronnie.

“Well, of *course!*” said George. “What do you think! I’ll go first. Let me squeeze by you. Gracious, isn’t it narrow?”

“Now Jumpy’s gone again,” said Ronnie. “He must be halfway down the passage by now. JUMPY! Come back, you silly, or you’ll get lost.”

A distant bark answered him. Jumpy was doing a bit of exploring himself! The children followed, their heads bumping into the rocky roof of the passage every now and again.

“It’s leading towards the sea!” cried Ronnie. “It’ll come out somewhere on the shore, I bet it will!”

The passage went down and down, sometimes so steep and rocky that the children almost fell. It was all very strange and exciting. Their torches made patches of light in the darkness, and now and again they caught sight of Jumpy’s wagging tail some way in front of them.

Ronnie suddenly heard a curious noise. He stopped. “Listen,” he said, in alarm. “What’s that? Can you hear that queer booming sound? Whatever can it be?”

“I know!” said Susie. “It’s the sea! We’re coming near the sea. I wonder what part of the beach we shall come out on. Won’t anyone walking on the beach be astonished to see us!”



In front of them the children saw a huge wooden door, studded with nails.

Suddenly the steep little passage came to an end. In front of them the children saw a huge wooden door, studded with nails, fitting roughly into a rocky archway.

“A door!” said George. “Fancy finding a door down here! Is it locked?”

It wasn’t locked—but it was bolted. Luckily the bolts were on their side of the door! With Jumpy watching impatiently, George and Ronnie tried their best to push back the heavy bolts. They couldn’t—but the screws that held the bolts to the door suddenly gave way, for they were set in wood that had rotted and grown weak with the years. They fell out and the door swung open before them.

They flashed their torches beyond it. They saw a cave there, a surprisingly large one, with a high rocky roof and a smooth sandy floor. Directly opposite was a tiny opening, just big enough for a man to creep through, that looked out on the sea just below! It was a most astonishing sight.

Daylight came in through the hole in the cave-wall. The children switched off their torches and looked round.

“Old trunks! Brass-bound boxes!” cried Ronnie running to where they stood in untidy heaps here and there. “Look Susie, look George! Do you suppose they’ll be empty?”

“Of course,” said George. He looked round the cave. “This must have been one of the old smugglers’ caves,” he said. “A jolly well-hidden one too. You can only get into it from the seaward side by that hole there. The smugglers would have to unpack their goods on the moonlit shore, and carry them by hand to that hole, and hand them in to someone ready in this cave.”

"But George—how did these boxes and trunks get here?" asked Susie, looking at them. "If they didn't come from the shore—they must have come from our house, Grey Towers, years and years ago!"

"Susie's right! They may have belonged to Grey Towers!" shouted Ronnie, and he flung himself down by one of the boxes. "Quick, let's open them and see what's in them. Oh, quick, quick, quick!"

The children couldn't open the boxes. They must be locked! They were bitterly disappointed. But then, lying half-buried in the sand nearby, George suddenly spied an old bunch of keys! "We'll try these!" he cried, and was soon busy fitting key after key into one of the trunks. Suddenly one key turned with a grating noise—and George flung open the lid. Packed hurriedly inside, flung in anyhow, were all kinds of jewels! Even now, after all the years of hiding, they gleamed brightly.

"Oh—look!" said Susie, in an awed voice, and held up what she felt sure must be an emerald and diamond necklace. "And look at this—it's like a dog-collar made of rubies. And this—and this!"

"It's the old Grey Towers lost treasure!" said George, and he looked very solemn and yet very excited. "The treasure our great-great-grandfather must have hidden when he was in disgrace with the king of those days. And somehow nobody can have known where he hid it, and when he was taken away and imprisoned and killed, the treasure stayed here and was never, never found—because nobody ever knew about that little round hole in the cellar under the big barrel!"

After this long speech all the children sat silent, thoughts spinning round in their heads. "We shan't need to leave our dear old home now! We can stay on at Grey Towers! We can sell all these things and be rich!"

"But will it be treasure-trove? Will the King have to have it?" asked Susie, suddenly.

"Of course not. It's our family's riches, even though they've been lost for years!" said George. "My word—what *will* Mother say?"

"Look what's in *this* box—old gold pieces!" said Ronnie, unlocking another treasure-ward. "What a lovely sound they make when I run my hand through them! I say—let's fill our pockets with this money, and dress ourselves up in all the shining jewels, and go and find Daddy and Mother! We'll make them stare all right!"

This seemed a lovely trick to play, and a fine way to show off their great find. Quickly the children decked themselves out in heavy necklaces, bracelets, brooches, pins, and sparkling belts. They filled their pockets with the money, and took some in their hands to fling down before their parents!

"Let's put that collar of rubies on Jumpy," cried George, and, giggling with excitement, they did so. Jumpy was astonished by such a heavy collar, but he didn't seem to mind.

Then off they went up the secret passage to the cellars, shouting and laughing in delight. "Here comes the old lost treasure! Here comes the old lost treasure!"

And you should have seen their parents' faces when they saw three dirty, dusty, gleaming children arriving with a ruby-collared dog, flinging gold pieces about, and shouting at the tops of their voices.

"We shan't leave Grey Towers after all, we shan't, we shan't!"

And, of course, they didn't!



"Oh—look!" said Susie in an awed voice.



Peter banged on Jill's door early one summer morning. "Jill! Get up, and let's get the horses. It's a heavenly morning, really super."

Jill sat up with a jump. She looked out of the window. The sun was streaming over the fields out of a sky as blue as forget-me-nots. Hurrah!

"All right, I'm coming," said Jill and leapt out of bed. "I'll just throw on my riding breeches and jersey."

In a few minutes she was down in the stables with Peter. Each of them had a horse of their own, given to them by their grandfather, who was a farmer, and bred cattle, sheep and horses.

"Dear old Bunter," said Peter, to the lovely chestnut horse that stamped with delight at seeing him so early in the morning. Jill's horse went to her too, nuzzling his great head against her shoulder in the way she loved.

She had called her horse Nuzzler, because of this endearing habit of his. She rubbed her hand up and down his velvety nose. "Hallo, Nuzzler! Are you pleased to see me so early? What about a gallop?"

Nuzzler whinnied softly, and capered round a little, his brown eyes gleaming. That was what he loved more than anything—a swift gallop over the grassy hills on a sunny morning.

Then off went both children, first cantering and then letting Bunter and Nuzzler gallop. Peter reined in Bunter a little and then called back to Jill.



Round and round the little green ring he went.

“Shall we go to our circus ring this morning? We’ve got plenty of time. I bet Nuzzler and Bunter would enjoy it.”

“Oh yes,” called back Jill. “I feel as if I could do all sorts of marvellous things on a day like this.”

They galloped to a little round clearing, roughly about the size of a circus ring. Both children had ridden horses since they were two years old and they were as much at home on a horse’s back as on their own feet. They had found this little “circus ring” as they called it, three or four years before, and had practised quite a number of daring tricks there.

Peter stripped off Bunter’s saddle. “I’m going to do bareback riding,” he said. “Red Indian act! Hooooo, Bunter! Round we go, top speed!”

Bunter knew this trick. Round and round the little green ring he went, just as if he was in a circus. He didn’t mind Peter’s wild Red Indian yells in the least. He enjoyed them. He even threw back his own head, and gave a loud and exultant neigh, as if he too were whooping like a Red Indian!

Peter stood up on Bunter’s back, and stayed there whilst Bunter went round and round. He kept his balance marvellously, and Jill clapped him loudly. Then down he flopped, on to Bunter’s back—but rode back to front!

“Jolly good, jolly good!” yelled Jill. “Now here I come too.”

She galloped into the little green ring and Nuzzler began to go round and round behind Bunter. Jill was almost as clever as Peter in the way she could stand up on his back. But she could not ride backwards. She always slipped off with a bump when she tried.

As the two children were performing to their heart’s content, letting out wild yells at intervals, two boys came up. They also were on horses—and with them was a string of shining, satiny horses, tossing their beautiful heads, and champing their teeth.

Peter and Jill did not see them at first. Then suddenly the two boys cantered into the little green ring on their own horses and joined the private circus! Round and round went the four horses, and Peter and Jill stared in sudden surprise at the newcomers.

“Go on, go on,” yelled one of the boys to Peter, seeing that he was about to rein his horse to a stop. “Now when I shout—turn your horses the other way and make them canter in the opposite direction.”

He gave a loud shout. “HUP then!” His own horse and his friend’s at once stopped, wheeled their heads round, and tried to go the opposite way. But, of course, Bunter and Nuzzler, not being used to this sudden change, did not turn properly—and all four horses bumped violently into one another. Jill gave a shriek and fell off. Then all four of the children collapsed into laughter.

“I say! Who are you?” asked Peter, looking with admiration at the string of horses standing patiently nearby.



With them was a string of shiny, satiny horses.

“We’re from the circus camp,” said the bigger boy. “It’s arrived this morning, down in Bolter’s field over there. We’re in charge of the horses. I’m Sam and he’s my cousin Dan. Sam and Dan, the world’s wonder-riders, real Wild West Kids.”

“Gracious!” said Jill, getting up from the ground. “Is that what you’re called? Are these horses circus horses? Do you ride in the ring?”

“You bet we do,” said Sam. “We’ve got proper Red Indian things—and you should hear us yell.”

“Aren’t you lucky to belong to a circus?” said Jill, enviously. “Fancy having all those glorious horses to look after, too. No wonder you ride so well if you perform in the ring.”

“Well, you two kids ride jolly well too,” said Dan. “We watched you. Say, your brother’s as good as any circus fellow, the way he stands up to ride that horse of his. Has he rubbed any resin into its back so that he doesn’t slip? We always do.”

“No. Never heard of it,” said Peter, feeling very pleased at this unexpected praise from a real circus-rider. “We only just mess about, you know.”

“Like to come and see round the circus camp sometime?” asked Sam. “And can’t you come and see us do our act some night? We’re hot stuff, Dan and me.”

“We’d *love* to,” said Jill. “We’d better get back to breakfast now, though. Can we come after that?”

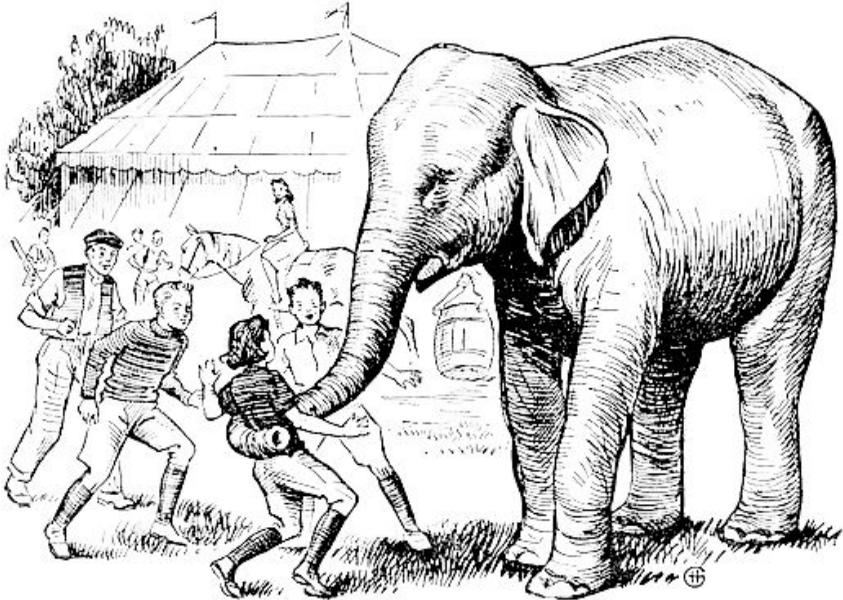
“Right. We’ll expect you,” said Sam. “Come on your horses, of course. They’ll enjoy having a gossip with ours.”

Jill and Peter galloped back home, thrilled. “How wizard!” said Jill. “I’ve always wanted to see round a circus camp. I wonder if they’ve got elephants this year.”

After breakfast the two galloped off to Bolter’s field. It had been quiet and empty the day before but now it was crowded and full of life. Gay caravans stood all about, tents had sprung up, and men were busy putting up the

tent in which the circus itself was to perform that night. It was called the “big top”, and was a most enormous tent.

“Two elephants!” said Jill, in delight. “And look at all those dogs. I’ve never seen so many tails wagging in my life, not even at a meeting of hounds! What’s in that travelling cage, I wonder? Oh, Peter, isn’t this fun? I wonder where Sam and Dan are. Let’s look for them.”



She suddenly wound her trunk round her waist.

Sam and Dan were on the look-out for them. They came over to the children and grinned. “Hallo! So you’ve come. Leave your horses here with ours, and we’ll show you around a bit.”

The circus camp was a thrilling place to wander round. They saw the two enormous elephants, Miss Muffet and Polly Flinders. Polly played a trick on Jill. She suddenly wound her trunk round her waist, lifted her up and set her gently on her head. Jill gave a squeal, half-frightened.

“Hey, Polly! Where are your manners?” called a little man nearby. He walked up, grinning all over his comical freckled face. “Sorry, Miss, if she scared you. But she only does that to people she really likes. She must have taken a fancy to you!”

He held out his arms and somehow Jill slithered down. She felt proud that Polly had liked her so much, but she thought she would keep away from both elephants, just in *case* they suddenly liked her very much again!

“You must come and see them in the ring some night,” said the little elephant man. “They’re grand. They play cricket with me.”

Someone came swiftly up to them, turning cart-wheels in a most graceful and amusing way. Immediately Sam and Dan joined in, and over and over went the three on hands and feet, like living wheels.

“Oh, teach us to do that!” begged Jill, when all three stood upright again, laughing and breathless.

“That’s Tickles, the chief clown,” said Dan. He didn’t look like a clown at all. He looked like a rather dirty and untidy young man, with a terrific shock of hair, a very snub nose, and the widest grin the children had ever seen. He was dressed in a pullover and old flannel trousers.

“Pleased to meet you,” said Tickles, jumped into the air, turned a double somersault, landed neatly on his feet, and then turned himself upside down and walked about on his hands.

“Full of beans this morning, isn’t he?” said Dan. “He’s a scream in the ring. Specially when he tries to ride a horse. We’ve got one called Toothy, who will try to pick Tickles up whenever he falls off. They bring the house down between them.”

“It does sound exciting,” said Peter. “I wish I could walk on my hands like Tickles does.”

“Well, we’ll teach you if you like,” said Tickle, and walked off with the little company to see an excited crowd of dogs, who were gathering round a small woman.

“That’s Madam Lilliput and her performing dogs,” said Dan. “See that little white one? He’s a marvel. They all play football in the ring, and Tippy’s goal. You should see him bump the ball away from goal with his nose.”

The dogs looked very lively and well-fed and happy. They jumped up at Madam Lilliput, trying their best to lick her hands. It was plain that every dog adored her.

Taking a big football in her hands, Madam Lilliput wandered off towards the “big top.” “She’s going to put in some practice in the ring,” said Dan. “She doesn’t like being watched, or I’d take you to see those clever dogs of hers.”

They wandered round the camp, looking at the gay caravans. They peeped inside one or two, marvelling at the amount of stuff that was packed there. All of them looked cosy and comfortable, but one or two were rather dirty and untidy.

“Who lives in that grand motor-caravan?” asked Jill, seeing a big one by itself, painted a lovely blue.

“Oh, that belongs to Jo Martini. He owns the circus,” said Dan. “He’s a fine fellow, but, oh! what a temper! You’ll see him in the ring when you come, with his outsize whip. You’ll hear him cracking it, too. It makes a simply terrific noise.”

“Do you remember when we had that bad fellow here—what was his name—Jeremy Hiyo—and. . . .”

“Oh, yes,” finished Dan, “and Jo flew into a temper with him and chased him all round the camp, cracking his great whip so cleverly that the end of it flicked Jeremy each time. Didn’t he yell?”

“I’ve felt the end of that whip myself,” said Sam. “Makes you yell all right! Look out—there’s Jo himself.”

A great big man came out of the blue caravan. He wore spotless white riding breeches and a top-hat. In his hand he carried the biggest whip that Jill and Peter had ever seen. He cracked it, and it went off like a pistol shot. The children jumped. Jo grinned at them.

“Good morning. Visitors, I see. Want to join my circus?”

“Oh! I wish we *could!*” said Jill, fervently. “But I don’t expect we’d be allowed to.”

“I don’t expect so either,” said Jo. “You have to be born to circus life if you’re to be any good, you know. Trained to it from a day old. See this whip? You wouldn’t believe how often I’ve used it on these two bad lads here.”

Sam and Dan laughed. Mr. Martini cracked his whip again and strode off. “Isn’t he grand?” said Jill. “I feel half scared of him, but I like him all the same.”

“That’s what all the circus folk feel about Jo Martini,” said Sam. “He’s a proper ring-master, he is—strict and stern, not afraid of using his fists and his whip, too, if anyone needs them—but kind as your own mother at home.”

Peter and Jill spent the whole morning in the camp, seeing every animal and person there. The circus folk were friendly and kindly, and the animals all seemed to be treated as if they were humans. There was a big bear there that belonged to one of the clowns, and he was so tame that he was allowed to wander about loose. There were monkeys, too, that leapt and chattered on the roofs of the caravans, pointing at Jill and Peter with little hairy fingers.

“They’re surprised to see you,” explained Dan. “They love anything strange or new. Look out for Scamp—the one over there wearing a little red hat. He’s a real bit of mischief. He ran off with Jo’s whip one day, and stuck it in the chimney of Tickle’s caravan.”

“Look—there’s Madam Lilliput coming out of the big tent with her dogs,” said Peter. “Has she finished practising? Can we go and see the ring?”

“Yes. And it’s time we took the horses in and gave them a bit of practice there, too,” said Sam. “We’ve got a new horse, Ladybird. She’s not quite sure how to waltz yet.”

Jill and Peter helped the boys to take the horses into the great ring. Sawdust was scattered in the centre. The ring was enclosed by curved pieces of wood covered with red plush. Each piece fitted against the next, and made a great red circle.

It was fun seeing the horses canter round in rhythm, nose to tail. At a shout each turned round slowly and carefully and then went the other way. Then they had to waltz. Sam started a great hurdy-gurdy going, and when the music poured out, every horse pricked up its ears.

“They love music,” said Sam. “Now watch them waltz to it!”

Most of the horses managed to dance gracefully round and round, turning themselves neatly at the right moment. Jill and Peter watched in amazement. If only Bunter and Nuzzler could do that!

“See the new horse Ladybird—she’s trying her best to do what the others do,” said Sam. “She’s going to be a clever little thing.”

“They’re all beautiful,” said Jill. “Absolutely beautiful. Do they wear feathery plumes at night?”

“Yes. They’re as grand as can be,” said Sam. “And don’t they love being dressed up too! Bad as the monkeys. They just love it.”

“Now you can see our Wild West act!” said Sam. The string of horses trotted docilely out of the ring. Then in galloped Sam and Dan, whooping and yelling for all they were worth. The things they did! Jill and Peter watched in amazement.

They stood up, they sat down, they slithered right under their horses and up the other side, they stopped at top speed and reared up alarmingly, they even leapt to one another’s horses and changed places.



They stopped at top speed and reared up alarmingly.

Jill and Peter got tremendously excited and yelled loudly. Then suddenly two brown noses appeared at the tent opening, and Bunter and Nuzzler, attracted by the yells of Jill and Peter, looked in.

“Bunter! Come on! We’ll join in!” yelled Peter, and Bunter trotted over to him. Nuzzler came too. In a trice both children were on their horses and in the ring as well. What a commotion there was! The four horses enjoyed it as much as the children, and soon Peter began to do things as daring as those the two boys did. When he jumped from his own horse to Sam’s, Dan gave a yell.

“Look at that! Bravo, bravo!”

At last, tired out, and trembling with excitement, all four of them slowed down, and trotted their horses out into the sunshine. Sam and Dan looked admiringly at Jill and Peter.

“I say! You’d be as good as we are, if you did a bit of practising.”

“Do you think so?” asked Peter, eagerly. “Could we come along and practise with you sometimes? We’ve got holidays now. Bunter and Nuzzler would love it.”

“Yes, you come,” said Sam. “Then if you’re ever out of a job you could always ask Jo for one in his circus!”

Jill and Peter cantered off, their eyes shining. “What a morning!” said Peter. “Golly, we’ve always enjoyed messing about in our own little ring—but to practise in a *real* circus ring—it’s marvellous!”

“It’s wizard,” said Jill. “I do hope Mother won’t say ‘no.’”

Mother asked a lot of questions, but she didn’t say “no.” “You’ll get tired of it after a day or two,” she said. “But I’ve no doubt it will do you good to see how hard the circus folk have to work. *You* just train your horses for fun and pleasure—to the circus folk it is a way of earning a very hard living.”

So, morning after morning Jill and Peter rode down to Bolter’s field, where the camp lay set in its circle of gay caravans. They practised hard with Sam and Dan. Nuzzler and Bunter seemed to love it. Nuzzler even

managed to learn to waltz quite well, but Bunter couldn't seem to. He *would* turn round the wrong way, and upset all the others.

Sam and Dan taught the children how to turn cart-wheels and somersaults. Once they lent them old Red Indian suits, with shaggy trousers, embroidered tunics, and great feathered head-dresses. Jill had never felt so grand in all her life.

"Let's make up a new Red Indian game," said Sam, suddenly. "You can be a squaw, Jill, belonging to Peter. We'll be enemies and capture you. We'll tie you up to a tree, and then shoot at you with arrows—then up can come Peter. We'll snatch you up, put you on our horse, and ride off. Then Peter can come thundering behind and rescue you."

Feeling a bit doubtful about all this, Jill consented. It was certainly exciting, if a bit uncomfortable. She made a very realistic prisoner, yelling and screaming for help so loudly that Tickles the clown looked into the ring to see if she really meant it. He stayed to watch, applauding loudly.

When Peter thundered up on Bunter, and rescued Jill from Sam's horse, everyone was too excited for anything. "Golly! If only we could do that in the ring at night!" said Sam, wiping his hot face. "Wouldn't everyone love it!"

"Oh dear—I was half afraid I was going to fall off your horse, Sam, before Peter rescued me," said Jill, sitting down on the red plush ring. "Goodness, I'm hot. Oh, Nuzzler darling, don't breathe so heavily down my neck. Look, Sam, he's worried about me. He thinks it was all real, not acting!"

So he did. He hadn't been in the game, and he couldn't bear to hear Jill yelling for help. Now he was nuzzling her lovingly, trying to find out if she was all right.

"Horses are the nicest things in the world," said Jill, stroking Nuzzler's long nose.

"Madam Lilliput wouldn't agree," said Dan. "She thinks there's nothing to beat dogs."

"And the elephant man adores Miss Muffet and Polly Flinders," said Sam. "He's always saying that elephants are the cleverest animals in the world."

"And I suppose Miss Clarissa thinks her monkeys are the best," grinned Peter. "Well, give me horses and anyone else can have the rest as far as I'm concerned."

Both children had been to see the circus show two or three times. How different the circus folk looked when they were all dressed up for the ring! They were grand and gay and beautiful. Madam Lilliput, in her short, sparkling skirt, and her plume of ostrich feathers looked like a beautiful doll, though she was the plainest little woman imaginable in real life. Tickles, the clown, and his friends, Spick, Span and Soapy, the other clowns, looked lively and amusing in their circus clothes—quite different from the rather dirty, untidy youths they were in daily life.

As for Mr. Martini, he was really magnificent. He was dressed in gleaming white from top to toe, and even his top-hat was white. His top-boots were white and so were his riding-breeches. His whip had a vivid scarlet bow, and how he cracked it! He looked wonderful as he stood in the middle of the brilliant ring, with his performers around him.

"You know, Sam, I'd give anything to go into the ring just once," said Peter, longingly. "Just to *feel* what it's like—to be one of you, and one with all the animals. There can't be anything like it in the world."

"There isn't," said Sam. "It's the finest feeling there is. In the ring we're all one big family together, doing our best. We may quarrel outside in the camp, but in the ring we're the circus, we're pulling together, we're making a grand show, and aren't we proud of it!"

"I shall be awfully sorry when you go," said Jill, with a sigh. "You're all such fun. And those lovely, lovely horses. I know every single one of them now, and I don't know which I like best. Ladybird, perhaps, because she



A very realistic prisoner.

is so sweet and tries so very, very hard to do as well as the others do.”

“We’re giving our last show on Saturday night,” said Sam. “Then we go on to our next camp. It’ll be a grand show, so be sure you come. Jo says he’ll give you two of the best seats that Saturday.”

“Of course we’ll be there,” said Peter. “Mother and Daddy are coming too, but they won’t want to be in the front. Mother doesn’t like to be too near. Heaps of the boys and girls of our school are coming too, so be sure to do your best.”

“You bet!” grinned Sam. “We’ll yell to you when we gallop by in our Wild West act.”

“We’ve told everybody about you,” said Jill. “Simply everybody. They’ll all be looking out for you and they’ll clap you like anything.”

“They’ll think you’re wizard,” said Peter. “Gosh—I wish they could see *us* performing too—we’re almost as good as you are now!”

Saturday morning came. Peter and Jill rode down to the camp, feeling rather sad. It wouldn’t be there the next day. It would be on the road, rolling away to another field. How they would miss Sam and Dan and the horses!

“Good thing that school begins again next week,” said Peter. “I should feel lost without anything to do. What fun we’ve had!”

When they got to the camp they noticed something queer. There did not seem to be anyone about. Where could they be?

“What’s happened to everyone?” said Jill, in wonder. “Oh look—there’s somebody coming out of the big top.”

It was Madam Lilliput coming out of the great circus tent, hurrying as fast as she could. When she saw the two children, she ran towards them, her face screwed up as if she was crying. When she came nearer, the children saw to their horror that tears were running down her cheek.

“What’s the matter? Oh, what’s happened?” cried Jill, scared.

“It’s Sam,” said Madam Lilliput. “He climbed up to the top of the tent to put the lamp straight there—and he fell. Oh, poor, poor Sam! What shall we do? We want a doctor, quickly.”

Jill’s heart went cold. Sam! Gay, lively, kindly Sam. Tears came into her eyes.

Peter sat still on his horse. Sam had fallen from the top of the tent down to the ring below! He must be very badly hurt indeed.

“Listen,” he said. “Our father is a doctor. I’ll ride back home and get him to come at once. He’ll be here in a jiffy. Don’t move Sam till he comes.”

The boy flew off like the wind on Bunter. Jill heard the thud of the hoofs as he went, but she did not go with him. She wanted to see poor Sam.

She slipped off her horse and walked on trembling legs to the big circus tent with Madam Lilliput. Everyone was inside, even the dogs and the monkeys. In the centre of the ring lay poor Sam. His eyes were shut and he was as white as paper. Mr. Martini was kneeling over him, almost as white as Sam himself. Ticklees, the clown, was trying to keep everyone back.

“Don’t crowd round,” he said, in a shaky voice, not a bit like his own. “Give the poor lad a bit of air, can’t you?”

Madam Lilliput went up to Mr. Martini. “Jo! There’s a doctor coming. Best not move the lad at all. Give him something to drink—a drop of brandy. Peter’s gone for his father, who’s a doctor.”

The circus folk looked immensely relieved. To them a doctor was a kind of magician who could cure anything. They had been as frightened as children when they heard of Sam’s fall, but now they cheered up and murmured the magic words to one another. “Doctor’s coming! Now our Sam will be all right.”

Jill wasn’t so sure. She had heard her father talk many times of illnesses and accidents, and she was afraid that Sam might be seriously damaged, perhaps for life.

“Poor, poor Sam! Suppose he can never ride again! And poor Dan too! He’s so fond of Sam, and they do such wonderful things together. And there’s to-night too—the last night of all, when they’d planned to put on such a fine show. What a terrible bit of bad luck!”

Peter had found his father about to set out on his rounds in his car. He turned his car round at once, and set off in the direction of the circus. He knew all about Sam and Dan from his children. He was at the camp in four minutes, and drove his car into the field through the gate, bumping over the ruts.

Then he was in the big tent, making his way through the anxious folk. “Turn them all out,” he said to Jo. “Every one of them.” And out they went. Jill and Dan were allowed to stay, with Jo—and in a little while Madam Lilliput stole back to see if she could help.

Sam opened his eyes and groaned. Peter’s father examined the boy quickly and carefully. Then he stood up.



Everyone was inside.

“He’ll be all right, thank goodness. He’s not damaged himself too much. He’ll have to go to hospital, and have treatment for some time—and he’ll be very sore and bruised for a few days. There’ll be no riding for him for a month or two, though.”

Tears ran down Dan’s face—a curious mixture of tears, really. He was crying for joy because Sam wasn’t seriously damaged—and for grief because now he wouldn’t be able to ride with Sam for a long time. Jill sniffed too. She knelt down by Sam and stroked his hand.

“You’re not too badly hurt, Sam,” she said. “You’ll be all right. Poor old Sam!”

Sam tried to say something and couldn’t. He looked very worried indeed. He tried again.

“What is it, old son?” asked the doctor, gently. “Don’t worry about anything. You won’t do yourself any good if you do. Things will be all right.”

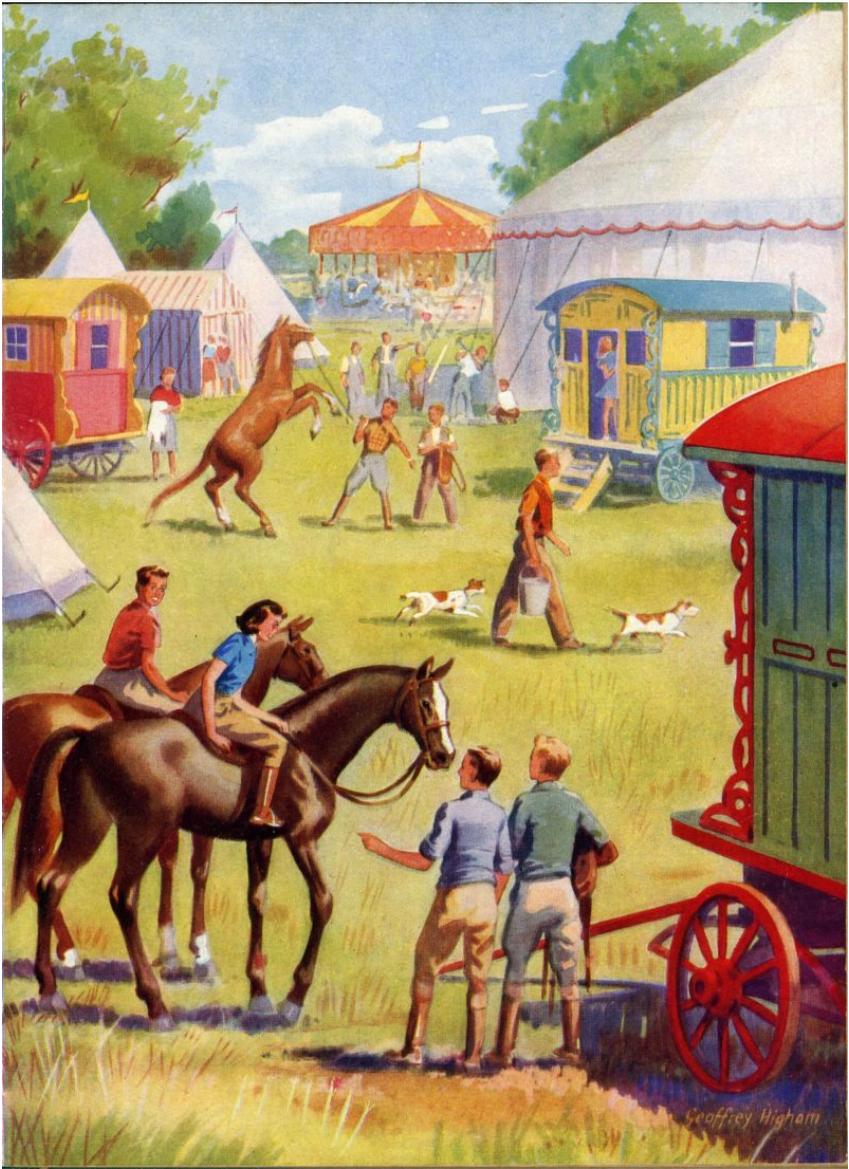
“It’s to-night,” said Sam, with an effort. “See? It’s the big show to-night. What about—the Wild West Kids?”

“That’s all right,” said Jo. “We’ll do without them.”

“No,” said Sam. “No. There’s Dan. Don’t leave him out. Jill, you and Peter—can’t you do it with Dan?”



Peter's father examined the boy.







“Now don’t worry yourself like this,” said the doctor, anxiously. But Jill pulled at his arm.

“Daddy! Why *shouldn’t* Peter and I help Dan to-night in the ring? We know everything! We’ve practised it time and time again. Even Sam says we’re as good as he and Dan are!”

Peter was now back, and he joined in eagerly. “Yes, Dad—we can do the Wild West Act. We’ve got a very good one, with Jill as a squaw. You’ve seen it too, haven’t you, Mr. Martini?”

Jo nodded. He had come into the ring once whilst the four of them were doing it, and had been amused and astonished. He looked at Peter’s father.

“They’re good,” he said. “And if it would set Sam’s mind at rest—and if *you* wouldn’t mind, sir, why I’d be pleased to give your kids a chance in the ring. They’d love it—it would be a reward to them for all the practising they’ve done with Sam and Dan here. But it’s for you to say, sir.”

The doctor looked down at Sam. The boy's eyes were shining and colour had come back to his face. He caught hold of the doctor's hand feebly. "Give them a chance, sir," he begged. "Let the show go on just the same without me, but with Dan and Peter and Jill. I'll feel happy then."

"All right," said the doctor, and Peter and Jill looked at one another with shining eyes. Poor Sam—it was because of him they had their chance, and they were immensely sorry for him—but they could not help feeling excited and happy to think of the coming night.

"We'll do our best, Sam," said Jill, and the boy nodded, looking happy.

"Help me to lift him gently to my car," said the doctor to Jo. "I'll take him to hospital myself. You can come with us, Dan. Not you, Jill and Peter. That would be too big a crowd for Sam. I'll look after the boy, Martini, till he's right, and keep you posted about him."

"Thanks, sir," said Jo, gratefully. "He's got no father or mother. There's only me and I'm his guardian. He's a good lad. Aren't you, Sam?"

Sam tried to put on a grin. He was in pain and it was difficult, but he managed a faint one. Then he was carried gently to the car, and laid comfortably on the back seat.

That evening the three, Dan, Jill and Peter, were in a state of the greatest excitement. Dan, wild and lively after the shock and grief of the morning, shouted and laughed. Peter and Jill dressed themselves in their Red Indian clothes, and Jill found that her hands were shaking with excitement. She could hardly do up her tunic.

All the circus folk came to wish them luck. "It's grand of you to step in like this, so that Dan can carry on," said Tickles. "Our last show in a place is always the best. You'll be fine!"



Peter and Jill dressed themselves in their Red Indian clothes.

"I hope so," said Peter, feeling suddenly nervous. "You know, Tickles, all our school friends will be there. Can't think what they'll say! And Mother and Daddy are coming too. I hope we shan't do anything silly."

"You'll be all right," said Tickles. "We shall all be fine to-night. We're all feeling glad that Sam isn't hurt too badly. He'll be back again before the winter, as good as ever, your father says. Say, he's a grand fellow, your father, isn't he? If I wasn't a clown, I'd be a doctor. Next best thing to making people laugh would be to make them well when they're ill. I wouldn't mind being a doctor at all!"

Peter smiled. Funny old Tickles. Then he began to worry about his part in the show again. Would he really be able to do it all right? Would Bunter be nervous?

Neither Bunter nor Nuzzler were nervous. They were excited and happy. Somehow they sensed that for once they were one with all the other horses. They were THE CIRCUS. Bunter whinnied a little, and Nuzzler nuzzled against him.

The grand parade began to the lively strains of the band. Into the ring went every performer, both human and animal, parading round in their finery, lifting their hands to greet the clapping audience. And into the ring went Jill and Peter too on Bunter and Nuzzler, following Dan. The children were all dressed in their Red Indian things, ready for their act later on. Their hearts were beating fast. They waved their hands too, and tried to see the faces of their parents in the vast audience.

“Hey, there’s the Wild West Kids!” shouted a shrill voice. Peter knew that voice. It belonged to Tubby, a boy in his form. “Hey, look! There’s three of them, not two, to-night.”

Peter waved his hand to Tubby. Tubby did not recognize him in his Red Indian clothes, but he was thrilled that one of the Wild West Kids had actually waved to him.

“See that?” he said proudly to his companions. “He waved to me. Gosh, wouldn’t I like to be in his shoes to-night!”

The grand parade was over. The show began. In came the beautiful horses to canter round and round, and to waltz and do their tricks. How they enjoyed every moment! Everybody clapped wildly at the sight of the sleek shining creatures, and Mr. Martini cracked his whip, and looked at them proudly. This was his great moment. He was the grand man of the circus, the ringmaster, and these beautiful horses were his. He wouldn’t have changed places for anyone on earth at that moment.

“Good old Jo!” whispered the watching circus folk to one another.

“Crack!” went his whip, and the horses changed round and went in the opposite direction, whilst the band kept time to their cantering.

One after another the turns came on. Tickles and the clowns sent the audience into fits of laughter. They had never been so funny before. When Tickles tried to ride a horse and fell off bump every time, Tubby and the others from Peter’s school cried with laughter. It made Jill and Peter laugh to see them.

The elephants played cricket with their trainer, and the dogs played football with Madam Lilliput. Their eager barking filled the ring, and when the little goal-keeper dog saved goal after goal the audience went quite mad with admiration!

“What a fine show!” said Tubby to the others. “What’s next? Oh, the Wild West Kids. Good!”

And into the ring rode Dan, Jill, and Peter! As soon as the time came for them to appear, all their nervousness went. Instead they were filled with a wild excitement, and they galloped in, whooping and yelling for all the world as if they really were the reddest of Red Indians!

The children in the audience clapped and stamped vigorously. This was what they liked. They shouted and yelled as much as the Red Indians did, when they saw the tricks they performed.

Round the ring they went at top speed. Then up on the horses’ backs they all stood. Then down they sat, facing their horses’ tails. Yes, even Jill could manage that now without sliding off. Then up they stood again, and Peter and Dan changed horses by jumping from one to the other.

“Good gracious!” said Peter’s mother to his father.

“I didn’t know they could do *this* kind of thing! Is it safe? Oh my goodness, there they go again. Well, I *never* thought Peter and Jill would go careering round a circus ring, performing like that!”

Then the three did their Red Indian act, where Jill was the squaw. Dan rode off with her and then tied her up to a post. He shot arrows at her, missing her cleverly, and she screamed so realistically that her mother almost went into the ring to rescue her herself!

Then up thundered Peter, whooping for all he was worth. How the audience cheered him! Dan snatched at Jill, got her on his horse, and galloped off with her round the ring. After him went Peter, whirling a lasso, which was another trick he had learnt. He neatly lassoed Dan and drew him to a standstill.

Then he snatched Jill off Dan’s horse, put her on his, and rode off with her at top speed, whilst Tubby and the rest cheered frantically at the tops of their voices.

Dan rode out of the ring after Peter. But in a trice they were back again with Jill to take their bows. They leapt off their horses, and bowed time and again. Then they all did a series of cart-wheels round their horses, leapt to their feet and vaulted on to their horses’ backs. Off they went out of the ring to a perfect tornado of applause.

Peter’s parents clapped madly too. They could not believe that Jill and Peter were so good. As for the circus folk they crowded round them and slapped them on the back till they were sore. Mr. Martini strode up and held out his great, hairy hand.

“Fine, fine! Bravo! Best act I’ve seen any kids do for years! If ever you want a job, you two, come along to me and I’ll give you one in my circus. See? If your father and mother ever turn you out of house and home, you’ll know where to come to!”



Tickles and the clowns sent the audience into fits of laughter.

performing dogs too.

"We'll come back next year," said Mr. Martini, getting into his blue caravan. "See you then. And maybe you can do a Wild West act again, with Sam and Dan, if your people will let you. Goodbye!"

The line of caravans crawled out of the field-gate and on to the road. The moon shone down on the gay little houses on wheels. Dogs barked and the two elephants, who were walking, trumpeted loudly.

"They're saying goodbye too," said Jill. "Oh Peter—do you think Tubby and the rest will believe it was us, when we tell them next week at school?"

"We'll see," said Peter with a grin. "Old Sam will be thrilled when he hears about it, won't he?"

The next week Peter spoke to Tubby and the others at his school. "Did you see the circus on Saturday? Did you like it?"

"Oh boy! Did we like it! It was super, colossal, wizard!" said Tubby, beaming. "Why, weren't you there? Come to think of it, I didn't see you."

"Yes. We were there," said Peter, grinning. "You saw us all right."

"I didn't," said Tubby. "I looked all round for you. You ought to have gone, you really ought."

"What did you like the best?" asked Peter. And, of course, he got the answer he hoped for.

"The best? Why, the Wild West Kids of course!" cried Tubby, and the others yelled in agreement. "You ought to have seen them, Peter—they were GRAND. I'd have loved to be them, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would," said Peter, grinning still more widely. "And what's more, I was one of them. What do you think of that, Tubby!" And he gave such a wild Red Indian yell that everyone jumped. Then he did six cart-wheels round the classroom, and ended up by colliding with the headmaster who was just coming in at the door.

"Now, my boy! Do you imagine that you are a circus-performer?" said the head, sarcastically.

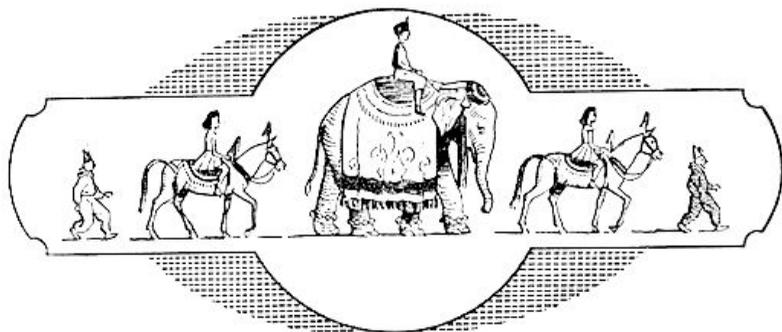
And Peter answered at once. "Well, yes, sir—I do!"

"Thanks, sir," said Peter, glowing, "but I don't think that's likely to happen somehow. All the same—it's a grand feeling to go into the ring and I'll never, never forget it!"

They stayed behind to have supper with the circus folk, and their mother and father came too. After supper the camp was to start on its journey to its next camping place. It was to travel in the quiet of the night. The moon was bright, the roads were empty. In an hour's time the caravans would be on their way, and the lorries would follow after, packed with all the circus properties.

"So it's goodbye," said Mr. Martini, at the end of the hilarious meal. He held out his hand. "Pleased and proud to have met you. Good as any circus kids you are, and that's saying a lot. Goodbye. Look after Sam for me, and send him back as soon as he's fit."

All the goodbyes were said. Jill and Peter could not help feeling a little sad as they shook hands with Tickles, the elephant man, Madam Lilliput and the rest. They patted all the horses, shook paws with the monkeys and with the





Number Sixty-two

Ever since John had solved the mystery of Melling Cottage he had been on the look out for another. But mysteries didn't seem to come along very often—and some mysteries turned out not to be mysteries after all!

There was the time when he had seen a man and a woman quarrelling in a garden, and suddenly the man flashed out a knife . . . but when John yelled out that he was going for the police, it turned out that the two were only rehearsing their parts in a play.

John had felt very foolish over that. And another time he had reported a mysterious sack on the other side of a hedge, apparently full of stolen goods. But it was only a sack of potatoes left there by the farmer for his brother to fetch as he passed by on his way to market.

"I'd better be careful next time," thought John to himself. "I won't report anything unless I'm absolutely sure about it."

Now one afternoon he went by himself to Oaktree Wood. There was a big tree there he liked to climb. It was an easy one, and he could get almost to the top. From the top he could see a very long way indeed.

It was like being in a ship, because the wind swayed the tree, big as it was, and the movement was like a boat going over waves. John liked it. If he shut his eyes he felt as if he were right out at sea.

So this afternoon up the tree he went. He was soon at the top, looking out over the countryside, which lay smiling in the summer sunshine.

John had a book with him. He opened it, settled himself comfortably on a branch and began to read. Sometimes he looked out from his high perch, and saw the lorries, 'buses and cars going along the roads.



... settled himself comfortably on a branch

He saw a car stop and pull off the road on to the grass verge. A man got out and disappeared. John waited idly for him to come back, but he didn't. Surely he hadn't gone for a picnic all by himself? John went on reading his book, occasionally glancing up to see if the car was still there.

After half an hour the car was still pulled up, empty. John began to wonder about it. Then he suddenly heard the crack of a twig in the wood below, as if someone had trodden on one and broken it.

"There's somebody coming through the wood," thought John, and glanced down through the leaves. But the tree was too thick for him to see anything below on the ground.

He heard a match struck. Somebody was lighting a cigarette. Perhaps he was waiting for someone? John heard a slight cough down below. The man was under the tree. Another twig cracked.

Then there came the sound of someone making his way through the bushes, and a low voice said, "That you, Lou?"

"Yes," said the man under the tree. "Number 62, to-morrow."

"Okay," said the other voice and its owner made his way back through the bushes again. That was all. Not another word was said. The man under the tree went off, and in about ten minutes' time John saw him come out of the wood and get into the car.

John strained his eyes to see the number of the car. He could make out the first two letters—ST, and the last figure, which was 0, but that was all. He wrote it down in his notebook.

"Car number ST . . . 0," he wrote. "Red in colour. Sports saloon. Can't see make."

John often wrote things of this kind down but as a rule they were all wasted. Still, you never knew. Things might come in useful sometime. He began to think about the queer message the man under the tree had given to the other, who was, apparently, already hidden in the wood.

"Number 62, to-morrow."

What did it mean? What was Number 62? And why to-morrow? John frowned, and puzzled over it. Should he report what he had seen and heard? No, better not. It might be nothing again.

"Perhaps number 62 is a house somewhere they mean to burgle," thought John, suddenly. "Number 62. Where is there a number 62? It must be a fairly long street if there are over sixty houses in it. I'll go and do a little exploring."

Before he slid cautiously down the tree, he listened to see if anyone might be about—the man hiding in the wood for instance. But he could hear nothing, so down he went, as quietly as he could. Once on the ground he sped through the trees as if he were a rabbit with a dog after him!

He went to the village. There must be a number 62 somewhere. What was the longest road? Yes, Summers Avenue must be. He went along it, looking for 62.

"Forty-one, forty-three, forty-five—oh, these are the odd numbers. I want the evens." He crossed the road and came to the evens.

"Forty-two, forty-four, forty-six—blow, there are only two more. Forty-eight—fifty. There's no 62."

He went down another street but there were even fewer houses there. That was no good. Then he went to Limmers Street, which was a terrace of small houses. Ah, there was a 62—good! John looked hard at it.

Nobody would want to rob a tiny house like that, surely! The people in it must be very poor for the curtains were dirty and ragged. Two or three equally dirty and ragged children were playing on the door-step. No, this couldn't be the 62. That was quite certain.

"Well, there's only the High Street left then," thought John, and went there. However, he felt that 62 could hardly be the one meant by the man, for it was the Police Station! It had no number, of course, but as it stood between shops labelled 60 and 64, it was clear that it must be 62, if it had a number at all!



62 could hardly be the one, for it was the Police Station!

"I can't understand it," said John, puzzled. "There are only two sixty-twos—and one's a slummy little house and the other's the police station. Perhaps the sixty-two doesn't mean the number of a house at all."

Then he wondered if by any chance the number might be a telephone number. No—the man wouldn't have said "sixty-two" then, he would have said "six-two" because that was how telephone numbers were given. People said "one-o" not "ten," they said "seven-three" not "seventy-three" and the man would certainly have said "six-two" not "sixty-two."

So telephone numbers were ruled out as well. Then what in the world could "sixty-two" mean?

Should John go to the police now, and tell them what he had heard? No, he still didn't want to, because it just might mean nothing, and he would be laughed at.

He turned to go home. As he went he saw a man running by in white singlet and shorts. Then after a while another came. They were practising running for races. John stared at them idly. Then he stiffened. Each man had a number on, in big black figures! The first man's number was 14. The next man's was 34. Then came a third man, padding along—he was 53.

John looked after the runners. Could the number 62 belong to one of these runners? Was it a *man*, number 62, that that fellow was talking of? If so, *why*?

He went on towards his home, thinking hard. Daddy was at home. Perhaps he would be able to tell

him about the runners, and their big race.

Yes, his father knew all about it. He had been a fine runner in his time, and he told John that there was to be a ten mile race the next day, on a certain route, and that so far as he knew almost a hundred competitors were entered for it.

"Then there may be a number sixty-two?" asked John.

"Yes, of course. But why do you ask that?" said his father.

"Oh—I was thinking of something," said John. "Daddy, is there a list of the competitors up anywhere? I'd like to have a look and see if I know any of them, if so."

"Yes. If you go along to the Athletic Club Room, you are sure to see a list there," said his father. "I didn't know you were so interested in running!"

John smiled and went off. He found the Athletic Club Room and peeped in. The secretary was there. "What do you want, youngster?" he asked.

"Could I just look at the list of runners?" said John. "For the Marathon Race to-morrow?"

"Yes, it's over there," said the secretary, and pointed with his pen. "They start at Beamers End, each running two minutes after the last. And they end at Longfields Club Room."

“Er—do they run past Oaktree Wood?” asked John. The secretary nodded. John began to look down the list of names. He came to number sixty-two.



Each man had a number on, in big black figures!

“62. Laurie Baxter.” Who was Laurie Baxter? He looked at the address. “16, Renfrew St.” That was a poor street, where factory workers lived, in the next town.

“Laurie Baxter, 16, Renfrew St.” Now why in the world should anyone want to bother about Laurie Baxter running in a Marathon Race?

“Who will win, do you think?” asked John. “Laurie Baxter?”

“Good gracious, no,” said the secretary. “He’ll be about halfway. He’s not much good.”

“Oh well—thank you very much,” said John and went out. Now, was he right or wasn’t he, in thinking that Laurie Baxter was the number 62 that the man in the wood was telling the other fellow about, for some reason or another? And was he right in thinking that the fellow in hiding was going to lie in wait for Laurie Baxter? If only he knew!

He couldn’t possibly go to the police and say “I think that Laurie Baxter, in to-morrow’s race, will probably disappear halfway through, and not turn up at the end because somebody in Oaktree is lying in wait for him!” It sounded too silly for words—and it might not be true. It was only what John *thought*, not what he knew.

He wondered what to do. Then he decided that he, too, would hide at the edge of Oaktree Wood, just before the race, and he would see if anything happened. He could always give the alarm if an attack was made on number 62.

So, the next afternoon, feeling rather excited, John made his way to Oaktree Wood. He chose a tree that overlooked the stretch of road that ran by the wood, down which the runners would go, and he climbed it, making sure that there was nobody to see him.

Then he sat on a branch and waited. After a long long time the first runner appeared. He was number 7. Apparently they were not running in their right order, but just anyhow, each starting off two minutes after the last.

Then number 16 appeared, and after him number 43. Then came 1 and 8 and 17, each some time after the other. Would 62 never come?

Then came one that looked like 62 but when he got nearer John saw that he was 63. Blow! Three or four more came—and then, surely, surely this was 62?

It was! He was a weedy youth, not a very good runner, with thin shoulders and skinny legs. He came along the road to a curve. And then things happened.

Somebody shot out from the hedge, clamped strong arms round Laurie and dragged him swiftly back into the undergrowth. His hand was over Laurie’s mouth. John gasped. It was all so sudden. He caught a glimpse of a second man, and then Laurie was bundled away so quickly that except for a swishing of branches as the men forced their way into the undergrowth, there was nothing to be seen or heard.



Somebody shot out from the hedge . . .

John shinned down the tree quickly. He ran after the men, but they had disappeared. Then, in the distance, he heard the sound of a car being started up. Oh, so the men had a car hidden somewhere in a glade, had they? If only he could see it and take its number!

But by the time he got to the little clearing, the car was moving away, and all that John could see was that it was red. Red! Then probably it was the same car he had seen the man in the day before. He had got the two first letters and the last number of the car, but that was all. Blow!

The car came to a road in the wood and soon the sound of its engine died away in the distance. John sat down on an old tree trunk to think. Now he wished he had gone to the police, and reported what he had thought might happen. It *had* happened. He didn't know why, or what the men were after—but the thing was, Laurie Baxter had been attacked and taken away in a car. He'd better go to the police and tell them about that!

So off he went. He marched into the station and asked to speak to the Sergeant, who was a friend of his uncle's. Then he told him what he knew.

"Please, sir, Laurie Baxter, number 62 of the Marathon Runners, was attacked and taken off in a car, just as he was running beside Oaktree Wood," said John. "I saw it happen. I was up in a tree, waiting for it to happen, as a matter of fact."

"*Waiting* for it to happen!" said the sergeant, surprised. "What do you mean? How did you know it would happen?"

John told him everything—how he had overheard the number 62 in the wood, said by the man from the car—how he had examined all houses that might be the 62 meant—and then how he had thought it must be the number 62 of the Marathon runners.

"And it was," said John. "I wonder why Laurie Baxter was attacked, though."

"I don't," said the sergeant, grimly. "I have an idea that he was in a burglary committed three weeks ago, and that he got off with most of the goods and sold them—whilst the others got nothing! They were scared in the middle of the robbery, and two of them fled, but Laurie apparently didn't. He waited, then when all was quiet, he took the goods and made off. I reckon the other fellows are wild with him, and want to know what he's done with their share!"

"Oh," said John. "But why didn't you arrest Laurie then, if you knew all this?"

"We questioned him, and put a watch on him," said the sergeant, "but we thought if we let him go free the others might make contact with him—and then we'd pull in the whole lot. But now it looks as if we've lost them all."

"Well, sir—I managed to get the first two letters and the last number of their car," said John, eagerly. "Look—St . . . 0. The car was red, sir, and was a sports saloon."

"Good boy!" said the sergeant, and took John's notebook. "This will help tremendously. We can stop all cars



“Good boy!” said the sergeant, and took John’s notebook

of this description.”

Then a radio call at once went out to police patrols. “Calling all cars, calling all cars. Please watch for a red car, make unknown, sports saloon type, first two letters ST, last number 0. Three men inside. Hold for questioning. Over.”

“Can I stay here and see if anything happens, please?” asked John, excited.

“Right,” said the sergeant. “Seeing that you’ve brought us so much information, you can wait—I might want to ask you more questions, mightn’t I?”

So John waited. He had a cup of tea with the sergeant and felt very important. Many telephone calls came in, but nothing exciting, until at last there came the one the sergeant wanted. He turned to John.

“They’ve got them! The car was caught at Reading. The whole number is STA 120. It’s a Humber, sports saloon, red. Three men inside, one of them Laurie Baxter. *Now we’ll get going!*”

They did. Laurie was so angry with his companions for attacking and kidnapping that he gave the whole show away. He told where the rest of the unsold stolen goods were, and related his companions’ share in the various robberies they had committed together.

“So now,” finished the sergeant, smiling at the thrilled boy in front of him, “they’ll all spend a nice quiet little time thinking over their sins in prison. They’ll commit no more robberies for a while—thanks to you, Detective John!”

And Detective John went proudly home. He’d solved another problem. Now—what would the next one be?

(You’ll find, it on page [169](#))



“Miss Hannah—when the girls go out to tea and I’m alone, will you come up to the playroom and make something with me, like you did with the girls when *I* went out to tea?” said Jack.

Miss Hannah laughed. “Yes, if you like. The girls are going out this afternoon—so make up your mind what you want to make and I’ll come along and help you.”

At half-past three, when Jane and Lucy had gone out, Miss Hannah went up to the playroom. Jack was there, waiting for her. He jumped up and got her a chair.

“Well—what do you want to make?” asked Miss Hannah.

“I don’t exactly know. A trick of some sort I think,” said Jack. “One I could take to school and puzzle the boys with, Miss Hannah.”

“Well—we’ll make an Obedient Box then!” said Miss Hannah. “My grandfather used to have one and it puzzled us very much to see how obedient it was. Have you any match-boxes, Jack?”

“Heaps,” said Jack. “I save them up. Wait a minute and I’ll get some nice strong ones.” He went to his cupboard and brought some out.

“Now choose one for yourself and I will choose one too,” said Miss Hannah. “Two good strong ones. That’s right. Now we’ll decorate them in some way first. I shall cut a strip of white paper to a size that will just fit nicely all round my box—like that. Now I shall decorate it. I’ll borrow Lucy’s paint-box.”

They both decorated their match-boxes and then gummed the decorated paper round their boxes.

“Now we make holes in the short sides of the match-box at the ends,” said Miss Hannah. “One hole there—and one there. That’s for us to thread string through. Make them exactly opposite each other.”

They did that. “Now cut out a piece of stiff paper that will just fit inside the box,” said Miss Hannah, “but make it a little *longer* than the box, so that when we put it in, it forms a little arch—like that. This is very important in our trick-box.”

They each put their cut-out piece of paper in their box, but as they had cut them a bit longer than the box, the little papers made a curved arch inside.

“Now we thread a piece of string through the holes in the box,” said Miss Hannah. “It must go *over* the little arch of paper. Make a knot in each end of the string. Now—push the box into its decorated lid.”

Jack did so. He looked puzzled. “What is it all for? Why do you call it an Obedient Box?”

“I’ll show you,” said Miss Hannah, and she held up the string, one hand at the top, one hand at the bottom, the box in the middle of it. She held the string loosely and the box ran right down it to the bottom. Then she turned it the other way up, so that the box was at the top of the string again.

“Call out ‘Stop!’ when you want the box to stop on the string,” said Miss Hannah. The box began to run down the string.

“Stop!” called Jack, and the box at once stopped. “Go on!” said Jack, and it went on down the string.

“Stop!” he called again before it had reached the bottom, and it stopped. Marvellous!

“It is an obedient box!” he said with a laugh. “How do you do it? Will mine do the same? Show me.”

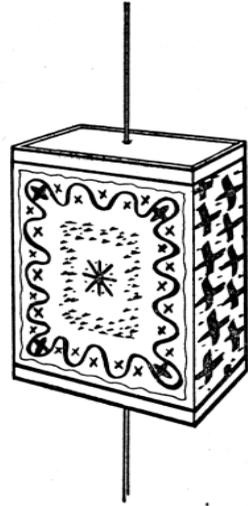
“Well, all you do is this,” said Miss Hannah. “When anyone calls out ‘stop’, hold the string tightly, and the box will at once stop. When they call out ‘Go on!’ hold the string loosely and the box will go on down the string.”

“But what makes that happen?” asked Jack, puzzled.

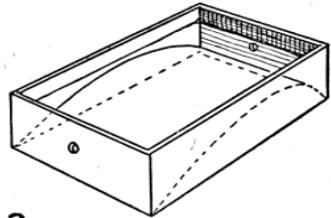
“You can work that out for yourself,” said Miss Hannah. “Now—practise a bit, and you’ll see how easy it is.”

“Won’t the boys wonder how I do it!” said Jack, letting the match-box run down the string and stop halfway when Miss Hannah told it to. “The Obedient Box! It’s a jolly good trick, Miss Hannah. Thank you very much!”

(For the next Rainy Afternoon, see page [142](#))



1.
The decorated
matchbox on
the string



2.
Inside of
matchbox showing
slip of paper
making an arch

WHITE CAPS.

Snowdrop, put on your little white cap,
Come and peep at me, please.
You've slept all the winter and had a fine nap,
But now there's a nice warm breeze.
The sun is out in a pale blue sky,
Jack Frost has hidden away,
So put on your bonnet and don't be shy,
But come in the garden and play!

Then one by one all the snowdrops small
Put on their bonnets of white,
And there they play by the garden wall,
A really enchanting sight!

A Week before Christmas



The Jameson family were making their Christmas plans. They sat round the table under the lamp, four of them—Mother, Ronnie, Ellen and Betsy. Daddy was far away across the sea, and wouldn't be home for Christmas.

"Now, we haven't got much money," said Mother, "so we must spend it carefully this Christmas. We can't afford a turkey, but I can get a nice fat chicken. I've made a fine big plum-pudding, and I shall buy as much fruit as I can for you. Perhaps I can buy tangerines for a treat!"

"Can we afford a little Christmas tree?" asked Betsy. She was ten and loved a gay Christmas tree hung with all kinds of shiny things. "Just a little one, Mother, if we can't afford a big one."

"Yes, I'll see what I can do," said Mother, writing it down on her list. "And I've made the cake, a nice big one. I've only got to ice it and put Christmassy figures on it. I'll see if I can buy a little red Father Christmas for the middle of it."

She wrote down, "Little Father Christmas," and then wrote something else down below. "What have you written?" asked Betsy, trying to see. But her mother covered up the words.

"No—I'm writing down what you three want for Christmas! It's not really a secret because you've all told me—and I shall try my hardest to get them."

Betsy wanted a big doll. She had never had a really big one, though she was ten. She knew she was getting a bit old for dolls now, but she did so love them, and longed to have a big one before she really *was* too old.

Ronnie wanted a box of aeroplane parts so that he could make a model aeroplane. He had seen one in a shop and longed for it. It would be marvellous to put all the parts together, and at last have a fine model aeroplane that he could take to school and fly for all the boys to see.

Ellen wanted a proper work-basket, one she could keep all her bits of sewing in, and her cottons and scissors and needles too. She was a very good little needlewoman for fourteen years old.

"They're all rather expensive presents," said Ellen to Ronnie and Betsy, when they had discussed what they wanted. "We mustn't mind if Mother can't get them. But she did say we must tell her what we really wanted. I know what *she* wants—a new handbag. They're expensive too, but if we all put our money together we might be able to buy her the red one we saw the other day—it's thirty shillings."

So they made their Christmas plans, and discussed everything together. Since their father had been away Mother had always talked over everything with the children. They knew she hadn't a great deal of money, and they helped her all they could.

“To-morrow I’m going to go out and do my Christmas shopping,” Mother said. “I’ve got to deliver all the parish magazines for the vicar, too, because his sister who usually does it is ill. I’ll do that first, then I’ll go and order the chicken and the fruit and sweets—and perhaps some crackers if they’re not too expensive. And I’ll see if I can buy your presents too—so nobody must come with me!”

“I’ll help with the magazines,” said Ronnie. But Mother shook her head.

“No—you break up to-morrow, and there will be plenty for you to do. You’re one of the boys that has promised to go back in the afternoon and help to clean up the school, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” said Ronnie. His mother was proud of him because whenever there was a job to be done Ronnie always offered to help. “But I’ll be back in good time for tea, Mother.”

The girls broke up the next day too. Then there would be six days till Christmas—days to decorate the house with holly from the woods, to make paper chains to go round the walls, to dress the Christmas tree, paint Christmas cards, and do all the jolly things that have to be done before Christmas Day.



“... to decorate the house with holly from the woods ...”

“Ellen, you put the kettle on for tea and lay the table, because I shall be a bit late coming back from my shopping this afternoon,” said Mother, the next day, just after dinner. “I’ll try not to be too late—but those magazines take rather a long time to deliver, and I *must* do my shopping afterwards.”

“I’ll have tea all ready, Mother,” said Ellen. “I’ll make you some toast!”

Ronnie went off to help at his school. Ellen sat down to draw some Christmas cards. Betsy joined her. The afternoon passed very quickly.

“Do you know, it’s snowing very, very hard?” said Ellen, suddenly. “Just look at the enormous flakes falling down, Betsy.”

They got up and went to the window. The ground was already thickly covered with snow. “Good!” said Betsy. “Snow for Christmas! That always seems right somehow. And we’ll have fun with snowballs and making snowmen.”

“Mother won’t like shopping much in this blinding snow,” said Ellen. “Good thing she’s got her rubber boots on. I say, isn’t it dark, too? I suppose that’s the leaden sky. It looks like evening already.”

The snow went on falling all the afternoon. By the time that tea-time came it was very thick on the ground. Ronnie came puffing and blowing in from the street, and shook the snow off his coat. “My word, it’s snowy! If it goes on like this we’ll be snowed up in the morning!”

Ellen put the kettle on for tea and began to cut some bread and butter. Betsy laid the table. Then she went to the window to look for her mother. But it was dark now and she could see nothing but big snowflakes falling by the window.

"I wish Mother would come," she said. "She *is* late. She'll be awfully tired."

Mother *was* late. The kettle had boiled over two or three times before she came. She opened the front door and came in rather slowly. Betsy rushed to her to help her to take off her snowy things. Ellen made the tea.

"Poor Mother! You'll be cold and hungry!" she called. Mother didn't say much. She took off her clothes, put them to dry, and then came in to tea. Ronnie looked at her in surprise. She was usually so cheerful and gay. He saw that she looked sad—and yes, it looked as if she had been crying too! He got up quickly and went to her.

"Mother! What's up? Has anything happened?"

"Yes," said Mother, and sat down in her chair. "I've lost my bag—with all my Christmas money in! Oh children, I've looked and looked for it everywhere, and I can't find it. I must have dropped it when I was taking the big bundle of magazines round."

The children stared at her in dismay. "*Mother!* All your money in it! Oh, poor darling, what a dreadful shock!"

They all put their arms round her. She tried to smile at them, but their kindness made tears come suddenly into her eyes. She blinked them away.

"It's my own stupid fault. I should have been more careful. I can't think *how* it happened—and now this thick snow has come and hidden everything. I'll never find it!"

The children looked at one another in despair. If the Christmas money was gone, it meant no chicken—no sweets—no fruit—no presents! Not even a Christmas tree!

"You drink a hot cup of tea, Mother, and you'll feel better," said Ellen. "What a shame! Never mind, darling, we shan't worry if we don't have quite such a good Christmas!"

"We've got the cake and pudding anyhow," said Betsy. "But, oh dear," she said secretly to herself, "I shan't have that doll now—and next year I'll be too old to ask for one." But she didn't say a word of this out loud, of course. She was much too unselfish for that.



"I've lost my bag—with all my Christmas money in!"

"I'll go out and look for your bag to-morrow morning," said Ronnie.

"The snow will be so thick by then that you wouldn't be able to see anything—even if you knew where to look!" said his mother. "I don't mind for myself, children—but it's dreadful to think you three won't be able to

have anything nice for Christmas—not even the lovely presents I had planned to give you.”

“Don’t bother about that,” said Ronnie. “*We* shan’t mind. Come on—let’s have tea and forget about it.”

But, of course, they couldn’t really forget about it. They pretended to talk cheerfully, but inside they all felt miserable. When Mother went in to see Mrs. Peters next door, they began to talk about it.

“We shall have to do something about this,” said Ellen. “Mother will be awfully unhappy if she can’t even buy a chicken for Christmas Day. We must make plans!”

“What plans?” asked Betsy.

“Well—to earn a bit of money ourselves. Even if it’s only enough to buy a chicken or a few tangerines, it will be something,” said Ellen.

There was a pause. Then Ronnie spoke suddenly and firmly. “I know what *I*’m going to do. The chemist’s boy is ill and can’t deliver medicines for the chemist. I’m going to offer to deliver them till he’s better, and he’ll pay me a wage. That will be *my* bit of help!”

“Oh Ronnie—what a very good idea!” said Betsy. “I wish I could be an errand-girl!”

“You’re too small,” said Ronnie. “You can’t do anything. Ellen, can you think of anything *you* can do?”

“Yes, I think so,” said Ellen. “You know Mrs. Harris? Well, she wants somebody to take her three little children for walks each afternoon. I could do that. They’re dear little children.”

“Oh, good,” said Ronnie. “Yes, that would bring in a bit of money too. It’s a pity Betsy is too small to do anything. She’s not bad for her age.”

Betsy felt sad. She didn’t like being the only one who couldn’t earn anything for Christmas. She wondered and wondered what she could do. She even lay awake in bed that night, wondering. And then, just before she fell asleep, she thought of something.

She remembered an old blind lady who lived in the next street. What was her name? Yes, Mrs. Sullivan. Mrs. Sullivan had a companion who read to her each afternoon. But the companion had gone away for a week’s holiday before Christmas. Had Mrs. Sullivan got anyone to read to her for that week?

“I read quite well,” thought Betsy. “I’m the very best in my class. I even read all the hard words without being bothered by them. I shall go to-morrow and ask Mrs. Sullivan if she would like me to read to her. Then, if she pays me, *I* shall be doing my bit, too.”

She didn’t tell the others, in case they laughed at her. But, next morning after breakfast she went down the snowy street and found Mrs. Sullivan’s house.

The snow was now very thick. It had snowed all night long, and in places it was as high as Betsy’s knees. She liked it. It was fun to clamber through the soft white snow. She knocked at Mrs. Sullivan’s door.

She felt a bit frightened. Mrs. Sullivan was rather a fierce-looking old lady and she wore dark glasses that made her look fiercer still. Suppose she was cross that Betsy should dare to come and ask to read to her?

Then Betsy thought of her mother’s lost bag with all its money in it. This was one small way of helping. She couldn’t turn back now!

Mrs. Sullivan’s daily woman opened the door and took Betsy into a little room where a bright fire burned. A big cat sat beside the old lady. The wireless was on, and music flooded the little room. Mrs. Sullivan put out her hand, groped round the wireless set, and turned the wireless off.





“Well, it’s little Betsy Jameson, isn’t it?” she said. “And what do you want, Betsy?”

“Mrs. Sullivan, I heard that your companion is away for a week’s holiday,” said Betsy, “and I didn’t know if you’d got anyone to read to you in the afternoons. You see, Mother has lost her bag with all her Christmas money in it, and we’re trying to earn a bit to make up—so I thought . . .”

“You thought I might pay you for reading to me, did you?” said Mrs. Sullivan. “Well, I shall have to try you. There’s a book somewhere—pick it up and read me a page.”

Betsy found the library book. She began to read in her clear little voice. Mrs. Sullivan listened with a smile on her face.

“Yes, you read quite well for your age—ten, aren’t you? I shall be pleased to engage you. I will pay you a shilling an hour for reading to me. Come at two o’clock each afternoon, starting to-day.”

Betsy felt very proud—but a shilling an hour seemed a lot of money just for reading. “I’d come for sixpence really,” she said. “I’m not as good as a grown-up at reading.”

“I shall love to have you,” said Mrs. Sullivan. “You won’t mind if we don’t have reading *all* the time, will you? I mean—it would be nice to talk sometimes, wouldn’t it?”

“Oh yes. But you wouldn’t want to pay me just for talking,” said Betsy.

“Well, I’ll pay you for your *time*,” said Mrs. Sullivan. “Whether it’s reading or talking, or just stroking my cat for me, I’ll pay you for keeping me company.”

“Thank you very much,” said Betsy, and she stood up. “I’ll come at two o’clock. I won’t be late.”

She went home as fast as ever she could, through the snow. She had something to tell the others! Aha! A whole shilling an hour for six days. If Mrs. Sullivan kept her for two hours each afternoon, that would be twelve shillings altogether—enough to buy a chicken, surely!

Ronnie and Ellen thought it was marvellous. They had news to tell, too. “I’ve got the job at the chemist’s,” said Ronnie. “He asked me a few questions, and rang up my headmaster, and then said I could come till the other boy is well. I’ve got to deliver medicines from ten to twelve o’clock each morning, and from three to five each afternoon. And he’ll tell me if there’s anything urgent for the evening.”

“Oh, *good!*” said Ellen. “Considering you’re only twelve, it’s jolly fine to get a job as easily as that. You’ll have to be careful not to drop any of the bottles.”

“Of course I shall,” said Ronnie, rather indignantly. “How did you get on with *your* job, Ellen?”

“Well, Mrs. Harris was very pleased,” said Ellen. “She’s going to pay me half-a-crown each afternoon for taking all the children out. They’re thrilled! I like little children, so I shall enjoy it. Between us we shall get quite a bit of money for Mother.”

“How much is Ronnie earning?” said Betsy.

“Four shillings a day,” said Ronnie. “Not bad considering it’s only a few hours. Four—and Ellen’s two-and-six—and Betsy’s two shillings—that makes eight-and-six each day to give to Mother. She’ll be able to get the chicken and the fruit and the sweets after all.”

“And perhaps a little Christmas tree,” said Betsy, hopefully.

The next thing to be done was to tell Mother what they had arranged. How they hoped she wouldn’t say they mustn’t. Mother listened without a word. Then she spoke in rather a shaky voice.

“Yes, you can all do your little jobs, bless you. I don’t think I mind losing my bag when I know what nice children I’ve got. I’m proud of you all. The money will certainly help to buy the things you’d have to go without, now I’ve lost my bag.”

Nobody brought Mother’s bag back to her. Ronnie thought that people must be very mean indeed not to take a bag back to the person who lost it. He called at the police station twice to ask if anyone had brought it in. But nobody had.

All the children began their jobs that day. Ronnie went off to the chemist, and listened attentively when Mr. Hughes told him about the deliveries. “The addresses are on the wrappings of each bottle or package,” he said. “Be sure to deliver at the right house, and whatever you do, don’t just push any package through the letter-box, in order to be quick.”



Ronnie set off with a basket of bottles and packages. The snow was very thick indeed, and it was a long job taking all the medicines round. Ronnie was astonished at the number of people who were ill. Most of them were very surprised to see him, but when he told them why he was doing it they all smiled and nodded.

"It's a pity more children don't do things like that," said Mr. George. "Helping their mothers when things go wrong."

Ellen got on very well too. The three small Harris children were delighted to see her. John, Mike and Sally all tried to cling to her hand at once. She set off very happily with them through the deep, white snow.

"We'll play snowballing. We'll build a snowman in the park. I'll try and build you a little snow-house," promised Ellen. They all had a lovely time, and when she brought them back to their mother at tea-time Mrs. Harris exclaimed in delight at their rosy faces and happy talk.

"Oh, Ellen, you've given them such a nice time. Here is your half-crown. You'll come again to-morrow won't you? The children will so look forward to it."

"I feel sorry you've got to pay me for my afternoon," said Ellen, feeling quite ashamed of taking the half-crown. "I've had just as good a time as the children, Mrs. Harris. I really have."

"Just wait a minute—I've been baking whilst you've been out," said Mrs. Harris. "I've got a cake for you to take home for yourself and that brother and sister of yours—what are their names—Ronnie and Betsy?"

And she gave Ellen a lovely little chocolate cake, wrapped up in paper. Ellen was delighted. How surprised Ronnie and Betsy would be! She thanked Mrs. Harris and hurried off home.

She met Betsy at the gate. Betsy's cheeks were red from Mrs. Sullivan's bright fire, and from stumbling home through the thick snow. "Look," she said, showing Ellen a bright two-shilling piece. "That's my first wage. And isn't it queer, Ellen, Mrs. Sullivan likes just the kind of stories I like! We read a most exciting school story for a whole hour!"

Mother smiled at all the cheerful talk. She had got hot toast and butter and honey ready, and the chocolate cake was put in a place of honour on the table. The children sat down hungrily.

"And Mrs. Sullivan and I talked a lot," said Betsy. "She told me all about when she was a girl—oh, ever so long ago—and I told her about Ronnie and Ellen and you, Mother. And then I had to brush the cat, Jimmy, and change his ribbon, and get him some milk. I really did have a very nice time. I can hardly wait till to-morrow to find out what happens in the story I'm reading to Mrs. Sullivan."



"That's my first wage."

"I bet she chose a story like that because you wouldn't be able to read a grown-up one," said Ronnie.

"She didn't! She laughed at all the funny bits too," said Betsy. "There's a mam'zelle in the book and the girls are always playing tricks on her. We laughed like anything."

"Mrs. Sullivan is very kind," said Mother. "Very, very kind. I ought to pay *her* for having you like this."

"Oh no, Mother—it's a job of work, really it is," said Betsy, earnestly. "Mrs. Sullivan says it's not easy to be a really good companion, and she says I am. Really she does."

"You're a lovely little companion," said Mother. "Mrs. Sullivan is lucky to have you. But I think she knows it. Well, as I have said before—what nice children I have got!"

"Well, we've got a jolly nice mother," said Ronnie, unexpectedly. "And what's more, Mother, I once heard the headmaster's wife saying to the Head that she had noticed that all the nicest children were the ones that had the

best mothers—so, if you think *we're* nice, you've got yourself to thank!"

Everybody laughed. They all felt happy and cosy. It was so nice to help, and to do a job well. Really it didn't seem to matter any more that Mother had lost her bag!

All the children went to their jobs each day, cheerfully and willingly. Mr. Hughes the chemist, Mrs. Harris, and blind Mrs. Sullivan welcomed them and wished there were more children like them. Ronnie broke no bottles, Ellen made the three Harris children happy, and as for Betsy it would be hard to know which of the two, she or Mrs. Sullivan, enjoyed themselves the more.

"Jimmy always purrs loudly when he sees me coming," Betsy said. "I wish I had a kitten. Jimmy purrs like a boiling kettle. I put a green ribbon on to-day and it matched his eyes. It's a pity Mrs. Sullivan can't see how nice he looks."

By the time that the day before Christmas came the children had given their mother quite a lot of money. Enough to buy the chicken, the fruit and a box of crackers! Marvellous!

Just as Ronnie was going home on Christmas Eve morning to get his dinner, Mrs. Toms called him. She lived in a little house in the middle of the village and she was a friend of his mother's.

"Ronnie! Would you have time to sweep away the snow for me before you go to the chemist's this afternoon? I did ask a man to come and do it but he hasn't turned up, and I've got my sister and her children coming for Christmas Day to-morrow. I know you're earning money for your mother and I'd be very glad to pay you for the sweeping."

"No, I'll do it for nothing," said Ronnie. "I'd like to. It would be nice to do something for nothing for a change, Mrs. Toms. Have you got a broom and a spade? If you have I'll come along at two o'clock this afternoon, before I go to Mr. Hughes, and clean up your front path for you."

"You're a kind child," said Mrs. Toms. "Thank you very much. If you won't let me pay you I shall give you some of our apples and pears for Christmas instead. I had a lot from my garden this year, and I've saved plenty. So you shall have a basketful to take home."

Christmas was going to be good after all, thought Ronnie as he went home. He was out again just before two and went to Mrs. Toms' house. The spade and broom were waiting for him outside the front door. Ronnie took the spade first. How thick and deep the snow was! Except for a little path, it had been untouched for days, and was quite deep.

He began to dig, shovelling the snow away to the side. He worked hard, and soon took off his coat, he felt so hot.

When he got almost up to the front door he dug his shovel into the snow, and threw aside a great heap. As the snow fell, something dark showed in it. It tumbled to the side with the snow. Ronnie glanced at it.

Then he looked again, more carefully. He dropped his spade and picked up the dark package. It was a brown bag!

"Mrs. Toms! I've found Mother's bag!" yelled Ronnie, suddenly, making Mrs. Toms almost jump out of her skin. "Look, it's Mother's bag—buried in the snow outside your front door!"

Mrs. Toms came hurrying out. "My goodness, is it really her bag? Yes, it is. She must have dropped it in the snow when she came delivering magazines some days ago. Would you believe it! And now you've found it! Well, well—what a good thing you're a kind-hearted lad, and came to sweep my snow away for me—or someone else might have found it and stolen it, when the snow melted!"

"I'll just finish this," said Ronnie, joyfully, "then maybe I'll have time to rush home and tell Mother before I start delivering medicines. Oh, my word—what a find, I can hardly believe it!"

He rushed home with the bag. Ellen and Betsy were not there; they had gone to their jobs. But



"Ronnie, would you have time to sweep away the snow for me?"

Mother was there, and she stared in delight when Ronnie held out the wet bag.

“*Ronnie!* Oh, Ronnie, where *did* you find it? Is my money in it? Oh yes, everything’s there, quite safe. Oh, Ronnie, this is wonderful. Just in time for Christmas, too! I shall go shopping this very afternoon, because now I shall be able to buy you all the presents I thought you would have to go without. It’s too good to be true!”

It was a very happy and joyful Christmas for the Jameson family that year. There was plenty to eat after all, and as much fruit and chocolate and sweets as anyone wanted. There was a Christmas tree hung with all kinds of things and topped with a lovely Father Christmas sent home by Betsy from Mrs. Sullivan. Mrs. Toms sent a basket of apples and pears. Mrs. Harris gave Ellen a big box of chocolate for everyone. And Mr. Hughes presented Ronnie with a box of sweet-scented soap for his mother.

“Everybody’s so kind,” said Ellen, happily. “Oh, Mother—this is the loveliest work-basket you’ve given me. It’s as good as a grown-up’s one.”

“And my model aeroplane set is *much* better than I expected,” said Ronnie. “Mother, you’ve bought me a more expensive one than I said—it’ll make a much bigger aeroplane.”

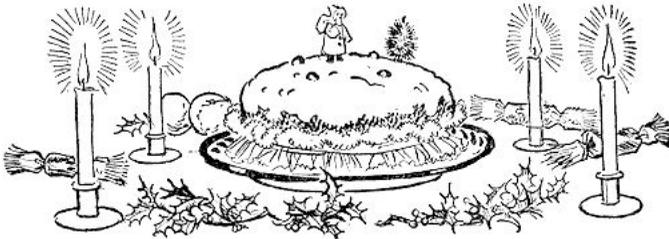
“I shall call my doll Angela Rosemary Caroline Jameson,” said Betsy, hugging an enormous doll. “She’s the biggest doll I’ve ever seen and the nicest. Oh, Mother—we never thought Christmas would be like this, did we, when you lost your bag?”



“Oh, Ronnie, where *did* you find it?”

“No,” said Mother, who was busy putting all her things from her old handbag into her new red one. “We didn’t. I didn’t think I’d have this lovely bag, for instance. I didn’t think I’d be able to get all the things you wanted, or any nice things to eat. But you’ve managed it between you. I’m proud of you. There aren’t many children who would do what *you* have done!”

But *you* would, wouldn’t you? It’s marvellous how a bit of bad luck can be changed into something good if everybody helps!





No. 4. MISS HANNAH'S RED INDIAN HATS.

The children next door had a great many Red Indian things, which Jack, Lucy and Jane envied very much. They had Red Indian suits and head-dresses, and a lovely wig-wam.

"It's the feathered head-dresses I like the best," said Jack. "Miss Hannah, aren't they lovely? I suppose you don't know how to make them?"

"Oh yes I do," said Miss Hannah. "If you badly want Red Indian hats, we'll make them! They're really very easy."

"Oh, good!" said the three children.

"I shall want a *brave's* hat," said Jack. "You know, one that not only has feathers all round it, but that fall right down my back too. But the girls mustn't have one like that. They're only squaws. They can only wear bands with feathers in."

"Oh, that's not fair," said Jane, at once.

"Well, it is really," said Miss Hannah. "It is only the Red Indian braves that are allowed to wear feathers down their back. The squaws mustn't. But I expect Jack will lend you his sometime."

"What do we want for the head-dresses?" said Jack. "Do let's begin! I'm longing to be able to wear mine."

"We want feathers, of course," said Miss Hannah. "The gayer the better. I wonder if Cook has any old pheasant feathers. If not we'll get ordinary hen feathers and dye them."

"Oh, I've got lots and lots of all kinds of feathers!" said Jane, joyfully. "I've saved them up for years, and I never thought they'd come in so useful. I've got hen feathers, and duck feathers, and pheasant feathers, and even parrot feathers! Old Miss Lawson, who used to keep a parrot, gave me all the ones that Polly dropped. I've got enough for all of us!"

"Good!" said Miss Hannah, "Get them then."

So Jane got them from the cupboard. Certainly she had a wonderful collection of all colours and sizes.

"Now we must make the band for the feathers to go in," said Miss Hannah. She got some pieces of material and cut them into long strips. Then she measured each child's head for size.

"Now each strip must be folded over into two," she said. "The feathers have to be set inside the fold and sewn into place."

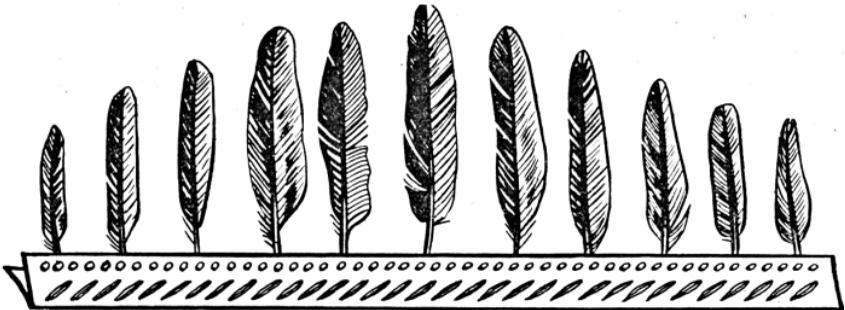
"Have I got to sew?" asked Jack, in alarm.

"Well, you can sort out the feathers and arrange them in the folds," said Miss Hannah. "Big ones at the front, of course. Choose gay colours. Then I and the girls will sew them into place."

It wasn't long before Jack had sorted out the best and longest feathers and arranged them in each fold of material. Then Miss Hannah and the girls set to work to sew them in tightly. After that the ends were sewn together.



The brave's head-dress.



The squaw's head-dress.

“We ought to decorate the bands with bright stitches and sew beads on,” said Miss Hannah. “I saw some beads in your bead-box that would do nicely, Jane. Get them. Jack, sort out more feathers to hang down your back. You’ll want plenty!”

Miss Hannah cut another, much longer strip of material into which to set the tail of feathers to hang down Jack’s back. It began to look very exciting, as she deftly sewed in feather after feather.

The girls were busy decorating the bands of their own head-dresses. Soon they looked very gay indeed. Lucy glanced out of the window.

“I say, look—it’s stopped raining! Do let’s go out and play Red Indians! We can wear our feathers, and make the children next door go green with envy. We’ve made much better ones than theirs!”

So out they went, with their Red Indian feathers on, looking very grand indeed. They yelled and gave such fierce war-whoops that Mother came to the window in surprise.

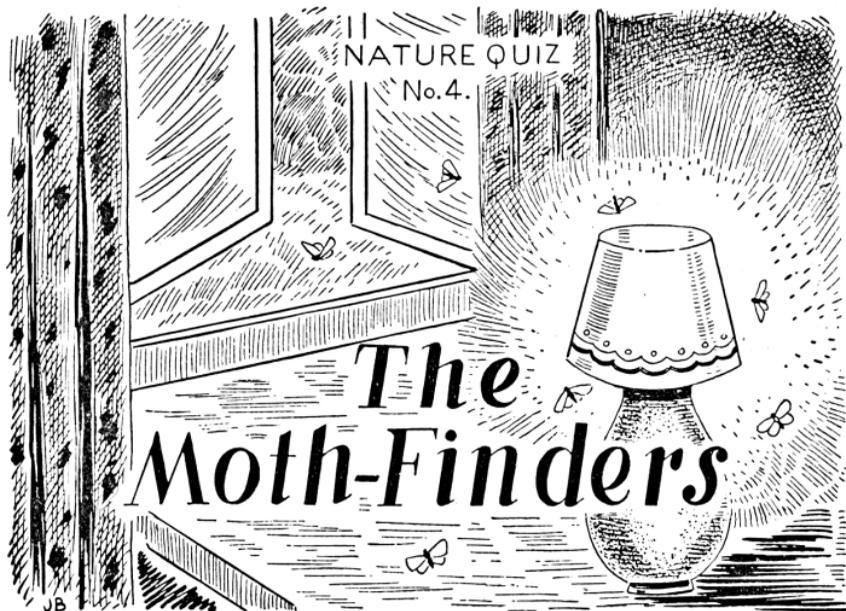
“Good gracious—so *that’s* what they’ve been so quiet over all afternoon!” she said. “Well, they’re making up for their quiet now—what a *frightful* noise!”

(For the next *Rainy Afternoon*, see page [166](#).)



SNAPPY DRAGONS

There are dragons in the garden,
Be careful how you go!
They're standing there, you'll see them
In a nodding row!
Be careful they don't get you,
They're snappy as can be.
But don't be scared—they're only
SNAPDRAGONS, as you see.!



“You know,” said Jack, one night when they were all gathered together in his playroom, “I’ve been looking for moths, and finding as many as I can. But there are an awful lot—hundreds more than butterflies, I’m sure. We shall never, never know them all.”

“Of course you won’t,” said his mother, who had just come in. “Unless you are a lepidopterist you can never hope to know more than a few common ones. It’s a life’s work to learn all the butterflies and moths there are—particularly moths.”

“Whatever is a lepidopterist?” said Alice.

“Well, I should have thought you might guess that,” said her mother. “A student of butterflies and moths, of course—their proper name is lepidoptera.”

“Let’s have our moth quiz now,” said Jack. “We’ll leave the blinds undrawn and the window open, and the lamp shining—then we shall get plenty of moths in!”

“Very well,” said his mother. “We’ll do a little nothing. Now—the first one. It’s very common indeed. You can’t walk through a field at night without disturbing dozens of them. They have grey-brown wings, and in the centre of the front ones you will see a bright silver Y—just like the letter Y.” Even Alice knew that one. “The Silver Y,” shouted everyone. “And look, there’s one on the lamp!”

“I thought you’d guess that,” said Mrs. Robins. “Now—a very gay moth indeed. It’s large, and has a fine red head and body. Its front wings are dark brown laced with white, and its beautiful back wings are a reddish-orange, with dark spots.”

“It sounds as gay as a butterfly,” said Joan, frowning. “What’s its caterpillar like? Just as gay?”

“It’s your favourite caterpillar,” said her mother. “The furry woolly-bear caterpillar!”

“Oh, oh, I know then! You mean the Garden Tiger moth!” cried Joan. “It’s a beauty.”

“Oh, of course,” said the others. “Next one, please.”

“Well, this is a most *enormous* moth,” said Mrs. Robins. “It’s a dark grey-brown, a bit dingy-looking, like a very poor old lady.”

“Old Lady, Old Lady!” shouted Jack. “You gave that one away, Mother.”

“Yes, I did,” said Mother. “I didn’t mean to, though. Don’t look so surprised, Alice. There really is an enormous brown moth called Old Lady. Go into the shed and poke about the dark corners of the roof. You are sure to disturb one. Now, here is a moth that flies in the daytime. It’s . . .”

"In the *daytime*," interrupted Alice. "I thought all moths flew at night."

"Most of them do," said Mrs. Robins. "But just a few don't. Now then—the moth I am thinking of is quite common. Its front wings are a glossy green-blue, and have six bright crimson spots. The back wings are crimson with a border of dark green. The moth has a burnished look about it and is very gay and bright."

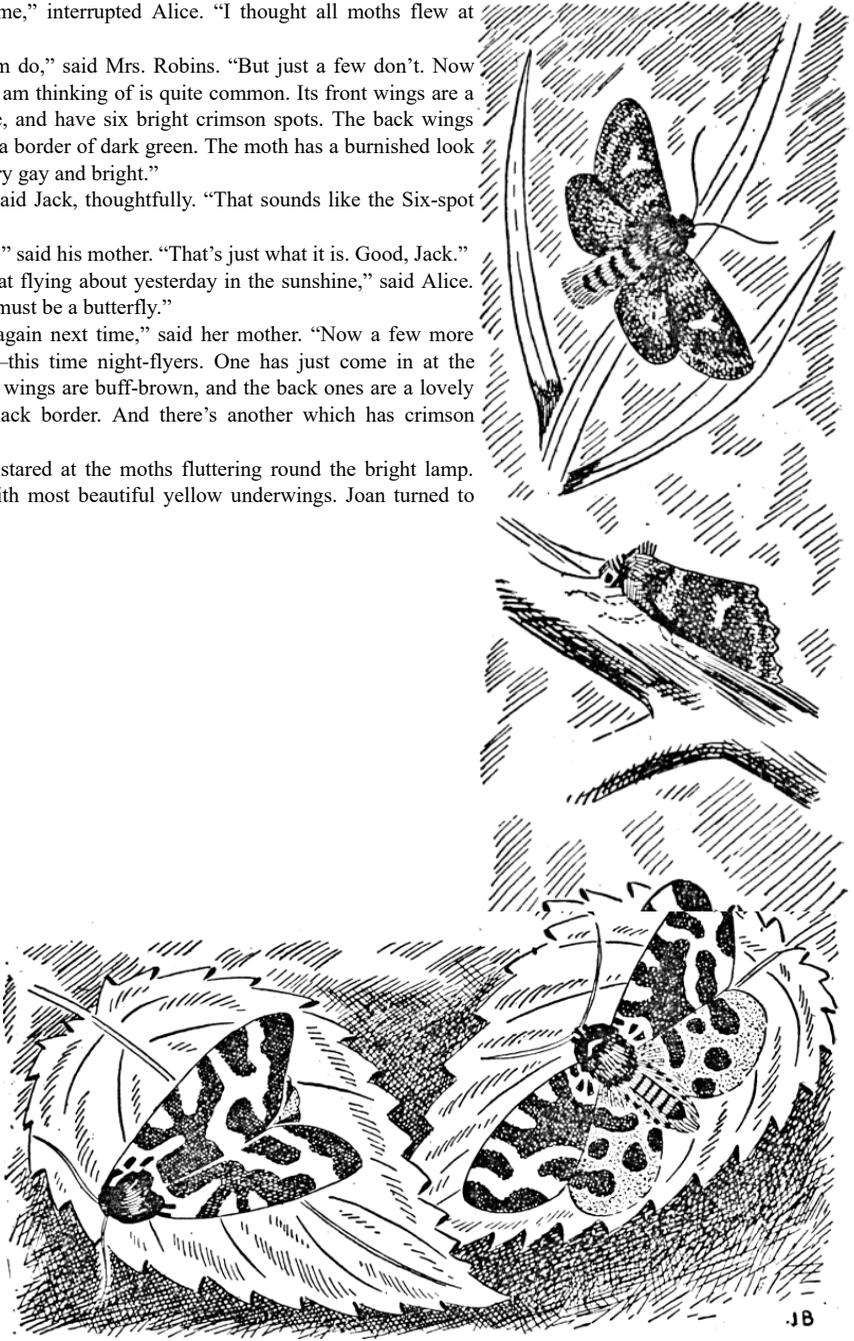
"Six spots," said Jack, thoughtfully. "That sounds like the Six-spot Burnet Moth."

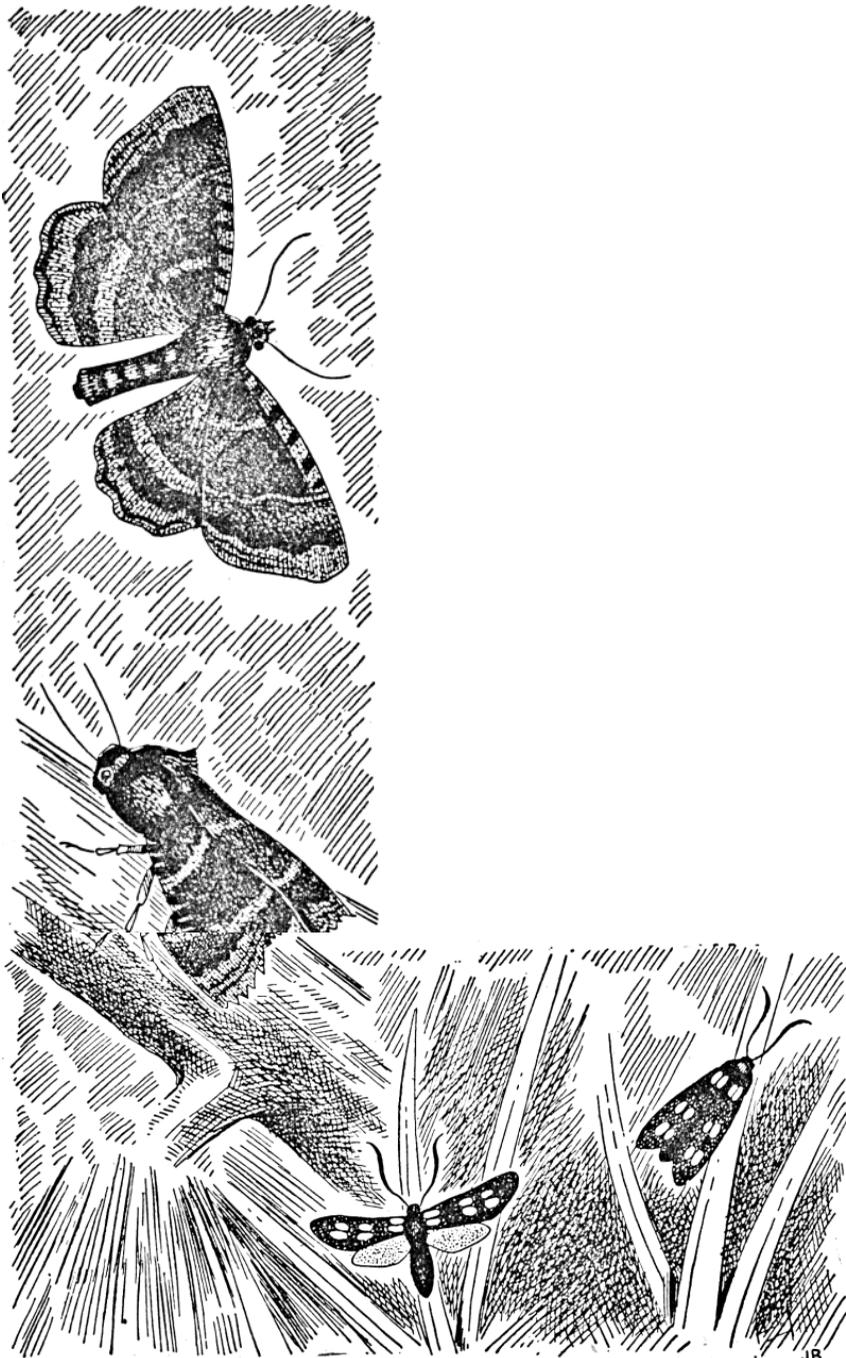
"You're right!" said his mother. "That's just what it is. Good, Jack."

"Oh, *I* saw that flying about yesterday in the sunshine," said Alice. "But I thought it must be a butterfly."

"Well, think again next time," said her mother. "Now a few more beautiful moths—this time night-flyers. One has just come in at the window. Its front wings are buff-brown, and the back ones are a lovely yellow with a black border. And there's another which has crimson under-wings."

The children stared at the moths fluttering round the bright lamp. They saw one with most beautiful yellow underwings. Joan turned to Mrs. Robins.





“Is it called a Yellow Underwing? And the red one a Red Underwing? They would seem the best names for them.”

“And that’s just exactly right!” said Mrs. Robins, pleased. “Aren’t they lovely—and they are quite common too. You will have to look out for all the different kinds of underwings. Now another dear little moth. I’m sure



some of you must have seen it, because it is quite common everywhere. It's snowy-white, and has a tuft of long yellow hairs on its tail."

"Gold-Tail, Gold-Tail!" cried all four children together. "Easy."

"Yes, very easy. I'll tell you

a funny little habit of the Gold-Tail moth," said Mrs. Robins. "Do you know that when it lays its eggs it pulls off its lovely gold hairs and covers them carefully up with them?"

"Oh, that's sweet," said Joan. "I shall always like the Gold-Tail for that. What next, Mrs. Robins?"

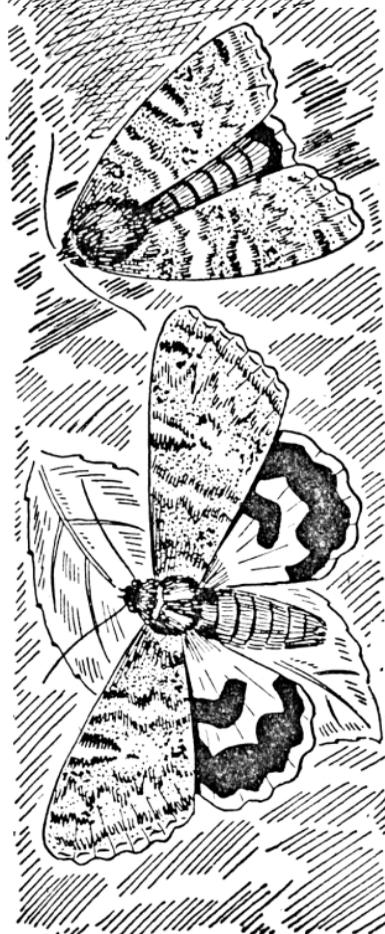
"Well, let me think. Now, who knows this very common moth? Its caterpillars are those queer 'loopers' that Jack found in the spring—you know, the ones that hunch themselves up into a loop whenever they walk, and look exactly like twigs when they're at rest. The moth is sulphur-yellow, and has little points or tails to the ends of its hind wings."

"Oh, I know that—the Swallow-Tail moth," said Richard at once. "There are lots about. I like them, they're pretty. This is fun, Mrs. Robins. Do go on. It's much easier when moths have names that are like themselves—like Swallow-Tail or Yellow Underwing."

"Right. You shall have an *extremely* easy one then," said Mrs. Robins. "Go and shake the bushes in any hedge and out will fly plenty of pretty *green* moths. What are they?"

"Well—are they called Green moths?" asked Richard. "Or Grass moths? Or—or . . ."

"He doesn't know, he doesn't know, he's only guessing!" cried Joan. "They're Emerald Moths, aren't they, Mrs. Robins? Bottom of the class, Richard!"



"Oh well," said Richard, "I should have come to that word next. It's a pretty name for those little green moths."

"And now a very small moth that you all know quite well," said Mrs. Robins. "Grey-buff."

"Do we know it well?" said Joan. "I mean—surely there are lots of grey-buff moths? Is it very common?"

"Very," said her mother. "Everyone knows it, even those who live in big towns and rarely see many moths."

“What plant does it feed on?” asked Alice.

“Oh, none,” said Mrs. Robins.

“But it *must* feed on a plant,” said Alice. “All moth caterpillars do.”

“Not this one,” said Mrs. Robins, smiling. “Aha! I’ve beaten you, children.”

“You haven’t, you haven’t!” cried Jack, suddenly. “It’s the *Clothes* Moth, Mother!”

“Quite right,” said Mother, laughing. “I nearly had you there, though. Now here’s one you will find in our gooseberry and currant bushes—its wings are creamy-white, and it has plenty of black spots and some yellow markings as well. Quite pretty, but a nuisance because its caterpillars strip off the bush-leaves.”

“The Magpie Moth!” said Joan. “Its caterpillars have the same creamy-white colouring with yellow and black spots. The currant bushes are full of them.”

“I must have a look,” said Richard. “I don’t think I’ve noticed it, although it’s so common.”

“And now one of our swift-flying night-moths,” said Mrs. Robins. “It’s . . .”

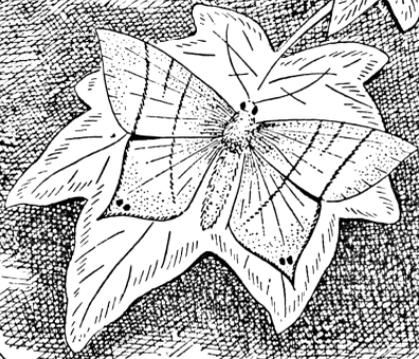
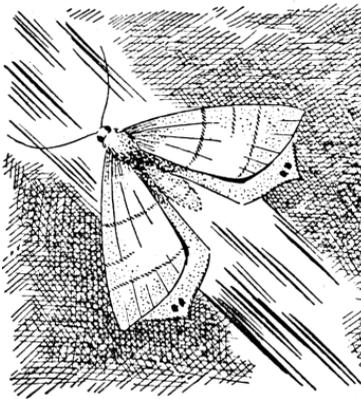
“Oh—swift-flying,” said Richard, at once. “Then it’s one of the Hawks, I know.”

“Don’t interrupt,” said Mrs. Robins. “It’s very large, sturdy and handsome. Its front wings are grey-yellow or red-brown, with dark lines and bands. The back wings are the same colour, and have two red-brown patches at the base. There’s a little white mark in the middle of the front wings.”

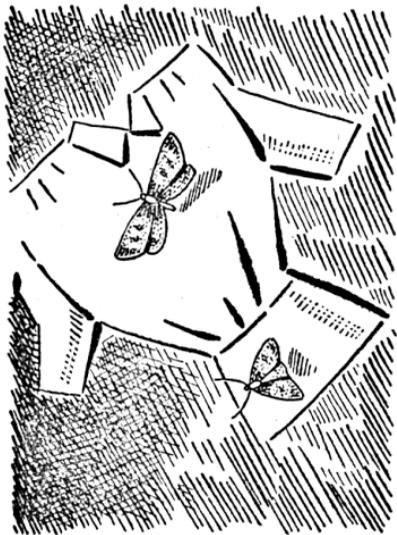
There was a silence. Nobody knew what this Hawk-moth was.

“There are such a *lot* of Hawk-moths,” said Jack, at last. “And it’s difficult to tell from your description exactly which one it is. Er—what tree does it feed on, Mother?”

“Ah—now you’ll guess the moth easily,” said Mother. “The caterpillars feeds on poplar leaves!”







“Poplar-Hawk, Poplar-Hawk!” cried everyone and Mother laughed.

“Yes, of course. The Hawks are lovely moths. I wonder you don’t study them. They are all handsome.”

“I’ll make them my special study,” said Richard. “I’ll know all the hawks before the end of the summer.”

“Well, be sure to find the kestrel hawk,” said Jack, slyly. Richard gave him a punch.

“Idiot! I know that’s a bird! Mrs. Robins, is that the whole twelve? It’s been fun. We haven’t done too badly, have we?”

“You’ll soon be good moth-finders,” said Mrs. Robins. “Or good moth-ers, if you prefer that name.”

“I’ll tell you who’s the best moth-er of all,” said Alice, giving her mother a hug. “*You* are!”

And that made everyone laugh, of course!

(For the next Quiz, see page 179)



OLD LADY



SILVER Y



YELLOW UNDERWING



MAGPIE



GARDEN TIGER



SIX-SPOT BURNET



EMERALD



SWALLOW-TAIL



RED UNDERWING



POPLAR HAWK

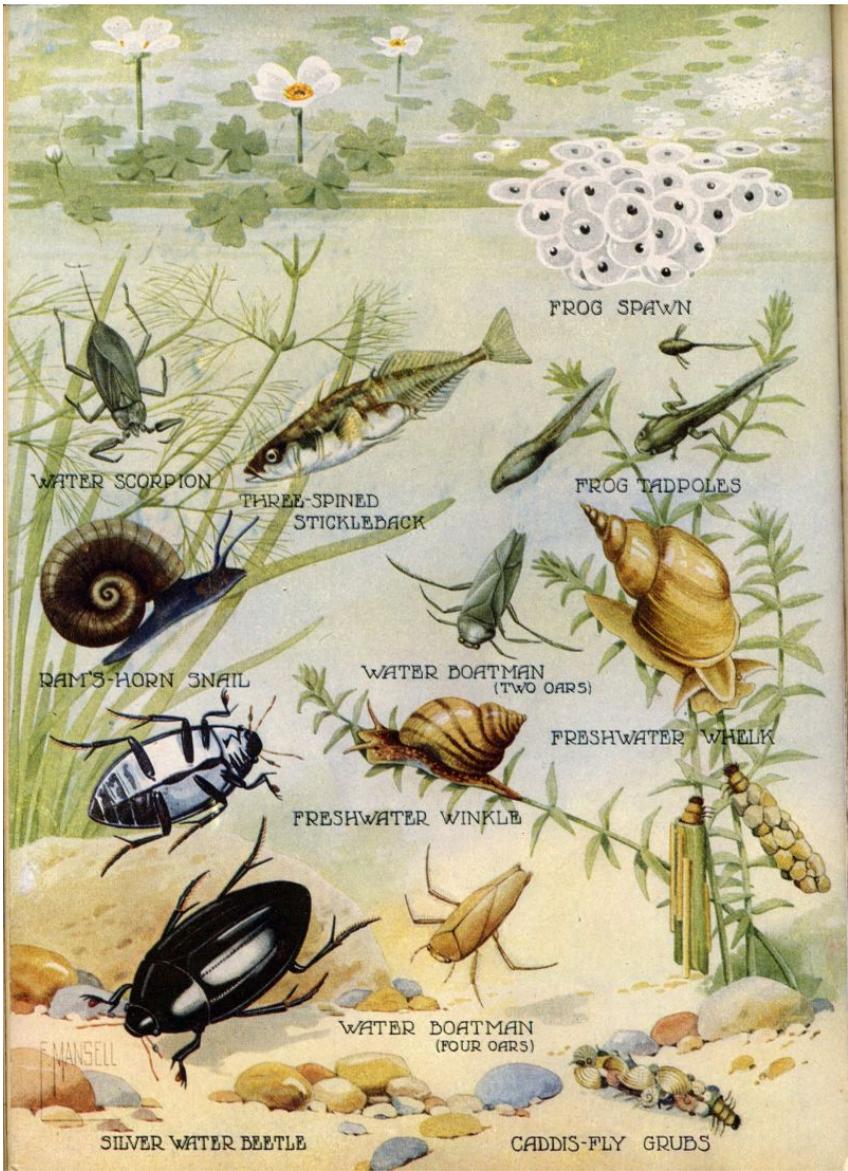


GOLD-TAIL



CLOTHES MOTH

E. MANSELL.



CROCUS CANDLES.

Like shining candles in the grass
The crocuses are glowing,
They will not grow too tall because
The March wind is a-blowing!
“Don’t blow too roughly, please!” they say,
“And do look where you’re going,
Don’t puff our little candles out,
They’re all so sweet and growing.”

“Well, my Father says—“

“Well, my Father says—”



Alan Richards stuck his hands into his pockets and glared at the boys round him.

“You’re beasts,” he said. “Absolute beasts. Jealous because you haven’t got a father like mine!”

He swung round and strode off, trying to take as long steps as he could. His face was red and angry, but in his mind he was puzzled and dismayed.

He went into the house-study and sat down. There was nobody there, thank goodness. Alan sat by the window and looked out on the lively scene below.

Boys, boys, boys . . . some playing games, some walking along with books, some rushing off on a message, some playing the fool.

“I thought I’d like it all so much,” he said to himself. “After all, I’m fair at most things, and I can *do* most things, and I’m not bad in class either—not top, but pretty near it. Then why do the boys make this awful set at me? What have I *done*?”

Alan was at West Dunnett School, famous for its work and its games, too. It was where his father had been before him, and Alan had been looking forward to going there for years. Now he wished he had gone anywhere else but West Dunnett!

His father had been a very famous pilot in the war. He was a V.C., a D.S.O. and had won the D.F.C. as well. So Alan was very proud of him, thought him the greatest hero in the world, and was determined that every one should know it.

This was his first term at West Dunnett. He remembered how he had set off with such high hopes, and how his father had clapped him on the back and said “Well, Alan, old man, you remember all the things I’ve told you, and you won’t go far wrong!”

And, so far as Alan knew, he *had* remembered all the things; and everything had gone wrong!

He thought back to the first week. He had been one of four or five new boys. An older boy had come up and offered to show them round the school, which was enormous.

“Thanks,” said Alan. “I feel as if I know every corner already. You see, my father was here.”

“So was mine—and my grandfather too,” said the older boy. “And also my great-grandfather.”

“Well, my father says the school was only founded a hundred years ago, so I don’t see how your great-grandfather could . . .” began Alan.

“Cut it out,” said the bigger boy. “If you go on like that on your first day goodness knows where you’ll end. This school is jolly old.”

“Yes, but my father says . . .” went on Alan again, and then was annoyed because the boy rudely turned his back on him and walked away, whistling loudly.

Another group of boys came up and asked the new boys their names.

“Mine’s Thomson.” “Mine’s Richards.” “Mine’s Harrison.”

Then came the next question. “What’s your father?”

“Mine’s a banker.” “Mine’s a doctor.” “And mine,” said Alan proudly, “is the most famous pilot of the last war. He’s a V.C. and a D.S.O. and . . .”

“Gosh—is Peter Richards your father?” said the now admiring group of boys. Alan sunned himself in the glow of admiration.

“My father says . . .” he began, and went on to repeat many things he had heard his father say. But new boys were not allowed to talk so much.

“Not so much gas,” said an older boy, and as soon as Alan opened his mouth again, they all talked nonsense at the tops of their voices so that he couldn’t make himself heard at all.

When Alan had settled down a bit, and had got to know his form-master, and the games-master, and the other boys of his form, he began to enjoy himself. But alas, it didn’t last very long.

He just *couldn’t* stop himself from bringing his father into everything. When the boys were discussing cricket, he butted in at once. “Well, *my* father says that Bradman was . . .”

“Oh, shut up,” said Terry. “Who cares what your father says? Keep him out of it.”

And when, in class, the master began to tell the boys about the modern developments of science, and asked them to tell him what they thought were among the most marvellous inventions, up went Alan’s hand.

“Yes, Richards?” said the master.



“Yes, Richards?” said the master.

“Sir, *my* father says that . . .”

“I didn’t ask what your father thought. I asked what you yourself thought,” said the master, who was getting just as tired as everyone else of Alan’s father.

“My father says! My father says! My father says!” chanted the class, under their breath, and Alan flushed red.

“Silence,” said the master. “We will now leave Richards to thoughts of his father, and go on to the next boy. Walker!”

Alan sat angrily silent in the class. How dare anyone snub his father, that great hero? People ought to welcome hearing what his father thought about things. Anyway, *he* wasn’t going to be disloyal to him. He was

going to go on following his example in every way he could, and he wasn't going to stop telling people about him either, or quoting his ideas.

So, very obstinately and persistently, Alan went on with his everlasting "Well, *my* father says . . ." "Well, *my* father doesn't think . . ." "Well, *my* father . . ."

And soon the boys made up a hateful chant that floated to Alan's ears wherever he was. "*His* father says he's a little angel-bud, but *my* father says he's an awful little dud!"

This silly rhyme was chanted whenever poor Alan came near, and he hated it. The boys laughed to see him go red and clench his teeth, and sang it all the more.

"It's not *fair*," Alan said to his only friend, William Forest, "my father has never said I was a marvel or anything like that—and I'm *not* a dud!"

"Well, why don't you just shut up about your father?" asked William. "Let the boys forget him, and they'll stop ragging you. And don't rise to their ragging, you idiot. When you do that red-faced act, and grind your teeth and clench your fists that's just what they want!"

The next day the form held a meeting about starting a chess-club. Chess was played a good deal at West Dunnett, and each form had its own players, who had matches with one another. Then the winner played the form above, and so on.

"What about you, Richards?" called Terry, his pencil hovering over Alan's name. "Do you play chess? And if not, would you like to learn?"

"Oh, I know chess," said Alan, at once. "I learnt to play years ago, with Dad. My father says it's a . . ."

There was a howl of delight. "My father says—oh, my father says!"

"*His* father says Alan's very good at chess, but *my* father says he's a nasty little mess," yelled Terry, making up the silly rhyme on the spur of the moment. Everyone thought it was marvellous and they took it up at once.

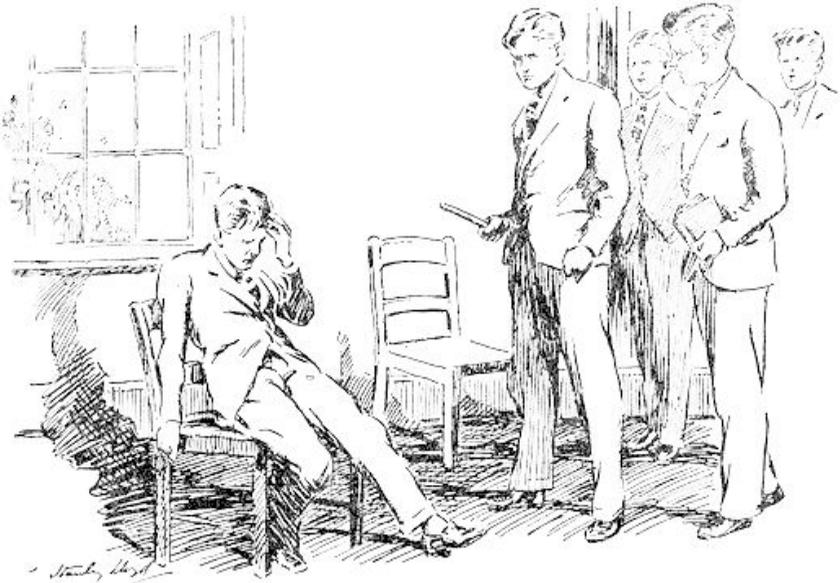
"*His* father says Alan's very good at chess, but *my* father says he's a nasty little mess!" chanted the whole form.

Alan flushed bright red, got up and walked out. "Beasts!" he said to himself. "Absolute beasts!"

And after that the boys waited every day for that "Well, my father says . . ." which Alan invariably produced, and then some wag would immediately make up an idiotic, rude rhyme, and the whole class would chant it in unison.

It was maddening. It was hateful. It spoilt everything for Alan. He began to slack at his work. He wouldn't try at games. He crossed his name off the chess list. He crossed it off the bird-watching list. He refused to go in for the swimming matches each week. In fact he was stubborn and sulky and, except for the faithful William Forest, quite friendless.

He slid almost to the bottom of the form. He got ticked off by the games captain three times in public. His form-master became more and more impatient with him. The boys ragged him unmercifully, and one afternoon Alan snatched up a heavy ruler and struck Terry hard on the head with it.



Terry sat down suddenly, looking dazed.

Crash! The ruler came down hard, and Terry sat down suddenly on a chair, looking dazed. Fortunately he had a very hard head, and except for an enormous bump that came up immediately, no real damage had been done.

"Now look here, young Richards, this is just about the limit!" said the head-boy of the form, James Walker. "If you can't take a bit of ragging you'll never be any good. And let me tell you this, too—that your father would be jolly well ashamed of you, the way you've been behaving these last few weeks! You may have got a V.C. for a father, a D.S.O. and goodness knows what—but *he's* got a jolly rotten son. I shall report you for that crack at Terry. You might have knocked him right out!"

And then it was that Alan had stuck his trembling hands into his pockets and glared at the boys around him. "You're beasts!" he said. "Absolute beasts. Jealous because you haven't got a father like mine!"

Then he had stalked off, trying to take long strides. Now here he was in the house-study on a fine afternoon when he should be playing games, and yelling and laughing with the others—and he was miserable and alone, expecting to be reported for a cowardly blow. It *was* a cowardly blow. Alan couldn't think how he could have done such a thing. He was ashamed and scared, and he hated every minute he was at West Dunnett!

"I shan't stay," he thought, suddenly. "I'll run away. I'll pack my bag, sneak out, and catch the train to Leaton. Then I'll get out and go to a farm and ask for some work to do. I'm big and strong. I won't stay at this hateful place a day longer!"

He went up to the room where the trunks and night-cases were kept. He found his own first-night case and pulled it down. He went to his dormitory, which was empty, and shoved a few things into the case. He did not stop to think any more. For one thing he knew that he had chosen to do a stupid thing, but he wasn't going to tell himself it was silly. He wanted to think he was doing a daring and a fine thing.

Everything was really very easy. All the boys and masters seemed to be out on the playing-fields that afternoon. Alan stole downstairs with his bag, went to a side-door, let himself out, and ran to the 'bus-stop. A 'bus came up almost at once and he got in. He remembered that it met a train that came in at the station.

"It's a Leaton train, too," he thought. "I can catch it easily."

He got his ticket at the station and then thought he saw someone he knew. Was it Matron? He darted behind the book-stall in case it was. He stayed there till the train thundered into the station. Then he made a dash for a carriage.

He jumped in and slammed the door. He peered out. Ah, it wasn't Matron after all. It was somebody rather like her. He sat down and heaved a sigh of relief.

Then he saw that there was somebody else in the carriage, someone who must have got in just before him. He stared at him in dismay. It was Mr. Luton, the singing master. Mr. Luton nodded at him, drawing on his pipe to



Alan stole downstairs, went to a side-door and let himself out.

he said in a casual voice, "I knew your father well. He and I were in the same squadron in the war. A very fine fellow."

Alan glowed. "Yes, isn't he?" he said, eagerly. "You know he's a V.C., sir, as well as a D.S.O. and he's got the D.F.C. too."

"Oh, yes, I know all that," said Mr. Luton. "And if ever a man deserved the whole lot, he did. And yet he was the most modest fellow I ever knew—never boasted, never pushed himself forward—and although, you know, he was sometimes afraid, before we went up on a bombing raid . . ."

"My father afraid! Never!" cried Alan. "Do you suppose he'd ever have got all those decorations for bravery if he'd been afraid for one moment?"

"It is a much, much finer thing to be brave when you are afraid, than to be brave when you are not afraid at all," said Mr. Luton. "Didn't you know that, Richards? I tell you, I knew your father well. Sometimes he was as scared as some of us others were—but where we might give in, or run away, he never would. He always stuck things out to the last. That's why his men worshipped him so—they guessed he was scared just as they were, sometimes—but they knew he'd stick things out, and dare anything to bring them and the 'plane back safely."

"I see," said Alan.

"He must be very pleased to think you're at West Dunnett, his old school," went on Mr. Luton, pressing the burning tobacco down into the bowl of his pipe and not looking at Alan at all. "You know—carrying on the old tradition—doing good work, playing good games, adding a bit more to the fame of his old school."

make it start.

"Hallo, young Richards! Taking an afternoon off, like me?"

Alan went scarlet. He really didn't know *what* to say. And there was his case on the seat beside him too! Whatever would Lutey think he was doing?

He mumbled something. Mr. Luton went on puffing at his pipe, and looked rather thoughtful. He had seen the bag beside young Richards. Now what was the young scamp up to? Where was he going?

Mr. Luton only saw Alan in singing lessons, which Alan did not much enjoy, for he was not very good at music. But Mr. Luton had heard quite a lot about him and his "My father says . . ."

"I suppose you've got leave to go off this afternoon, instead of playing games?" said Mr. Luton, still puffing away.

Alan hesitated. He was usually a truthful boy, but somehow lately he had been changing into all kinds of boys he really wasn't. He decided on a lie.

"Yes, sir, I got leave," he said, at last.

Mr. Luton said nothing for a moment. Then



It was Mr. Luton, the singing master.

Alan said nothing. This was awful. Didn't Mr. Luton know he'd been an idiot this last few weeks, a real slacker?

"It's nice to be proud of your father, isn't it?" said Mr. Luton. "And it must be just as good a feeling to be proud of your son. Grand to know he'd never be a coward, or run away from things."

Alan swallowed hard. He wished Mr. Luton would stop talking. He was saying just the very things that Alan had been trying hard not to think of.

Then he suddenly burst out with a few words that surprised him. He hadn't meant to say them at all and yet he did.

"Well, I'm a coward, Mr. Luton," he heard himself saying. "I'm running away!"

"I rather thought you were," said Mr. Luton, puffing away again. "Things have got too much for you, I suppose. You're afraid of them. So you're running away. Well, that's the difference between your father and you, you see. He was afraid, but he didn't run away. *You* are afraid, so you do run away. No V.C.s for you, my boy! It takes a fellow like your father to win those."

Then Mr. Luton picked up a paper, and began to read it. All that Alan could see was the top of his head and clouds of thick smoke. Alan's thoughts were muddled, but gradually one thing became quite clear. He was not going to be a coward. He would never be as brave as his father, but at least he need not run away.

When the train drew in at the next station, Alan got up. Mr. Luton looked at him over the top of his paper.

"Mr. Luton, sir," said Alan, and his voice sounded rather shaky. "Thanks for what you said, and for not rowing me. I'm not running away. I'm catching the next train back."

"A chip off the old block after all!" said Mr. Luton, and he grinned widely at Alan. He pulled him down on the seat. "Don't get out here. Come and spend the afternoon with me. I can make things right about that when we get back. I'd like a good old talk about the days when your father and I were in the R.A.F."

Alan sat down again, and the train pulled out of the station. And then he talked to his heart's content about his hero-father, the things he had done and the things he had said.

Mr. Luton listened quietly, as the boys at school had never done. He added a bit now and again. They got out at Leaton, and Mr. Luton put Alan's bag into the cloakroom there.



"I'm going for a good long walk, and you're coming with me."

"I'm going for a good long walk," he said. "And you're coming with me. We'll get things straight."

They did get things straight, and when Alan went back he knew quite clearly that what mattered at school was not what your father did or said, but what you yourself did and said. And he also knew that the main difference

between a coward and a real hero was that although they might both be scared stiff of things, one ran away and the other didn't.

"Gosh, it's easy to be a coward, isn't it?" he said to Mr. Luton. "But honestly I thought I was doing something rather grand and bold and heroic, rushing off like that to find work on a farm."

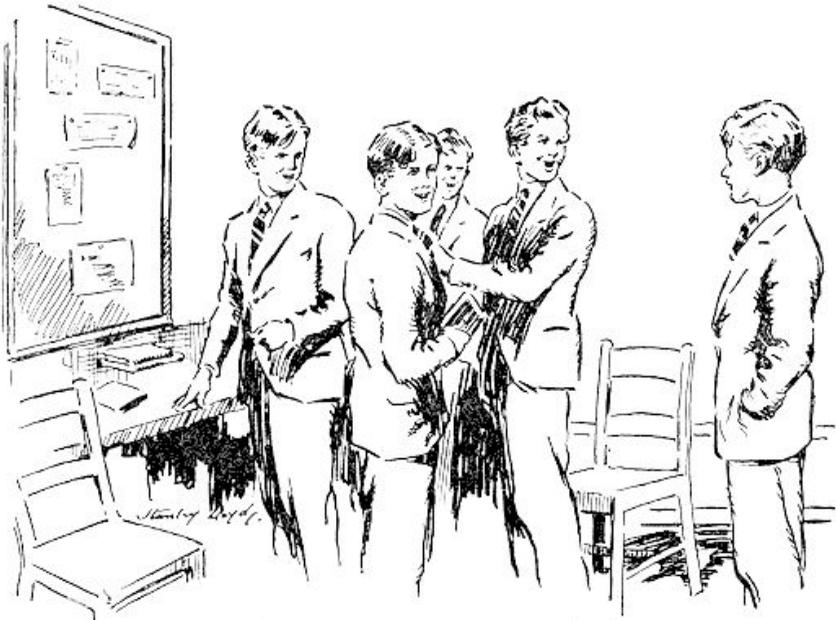
"Cowards usually wrap up their real reasons so that they may think themselves heroes!" said Mr. Luton. "By the way, I'll let you into a secret if you promise not to tell anyone till it's made public. Your father's coming down for Speech Day—and he's going to be the Speaker!"

And with that Mr. Luton waved his pipe at Alan and went off to the Masters' quarters.

Alan stood absolutely still. His father coming down for Speech Day—and making the Speech! How simply super. He wanted to yell for joy.

Then he went very soberly indeed to put his bag away. Suppose he *had* run away as he had meant to do? Suppose he had caused a frightful lot of trouble and annoyance and disgust? His father would not have liked to come down at Speech Day—he would have felt ashamed and sad.

"What a narrow squeak I've had," thought Alan. "Gosh, I'll always think twice and three times and four times in future before I act like an idiot!"



The boys were gathered round the notice-board.

He went down to where the boys were gathered round the notice-board, looking at the games list for the following day. Terry saw him.

"*His* father says he's a little angel-bud, but *my* father says he's an awful little dud!" he chanted, and everyone took up the refrain. Alan went scarlet as usual, but to everyone's immense surprise, he opened his mouth and joined in the chant!

The boys fell silent and stared at him in surprise. Alan spoke to Terry. "Terry, I apologise for hitting you. If you'd like to give me a good conk back with the same ruler, you can."

Terry was a generous, straightforward boy when it came to things like this. He grinned and rubbed the enormous bump on his head. "Apology accepted. I'll give you a conk all right though—here it comes!"



He slapped Alan on the back and made him gasp.

And he slapped Alan on the back and made him gasp. Then, suddenly, things were all right. Forest slipped his arm through Alan's and began talking about cricket. Nobody went on with the chant. Terry called to him to come and practise catching a cricket ball. It was really most extraordinary.

Alan hugged his secret to him. What would the boys say when they knew his father was coming on Speech Day? He wouldn't say a single word more about him. He wouldn't boast, or quote his words, or even mention him. His father could speak for himself, when Speech Day came!

The chanting did not stop all at once. There was quite a lot of "*His father says, my father says,*" and one or two rhymes were made up. But Alan always joined in the chant himself, so there didn't seem to be any point in it after a time. Also, Alan never now said "*My father says,*" which used so often to start the boys off.

Gradually the chanting stopped. Alan was pleased. He began to work hard and play hard. He wanted his father to get a good report of him, when he spoke to the Head on Speech Day. He would be sure to want to know how his son was getting on. Alan thought with surprise how very, very right Mr. Luton had been in all the things he said. It was nice for a son to be proud of his father—but it was just as important to the father that he should be proud of his son.

The boys were thrilled when they knew that the famous V.C. was coming to talk to them on their Speech Day. "He's your father, isn't he?" said the Head Boy of the school to Alan. He had never addressed one word to him before, and Alan was proud. He stopped himself boasting just in time.

"Yes. He's my father," was all he said.



He was cheered to the echo.

The famous V.C. arrived at his old school on Speech Day. He was cheered to the echo, and Alan had to blink away some most unexpected tears when he heard the cheering. And what a speech the V.C. made! A fine, man-to-man, straight-from-the-shoulder talk, one that every boy understood and responded to. Alan was prouder than he had ever been in his life before.

Afterwards he showed his father round. Mr. Luton came up to them. "Congratulations on the speech, old man," he said. "Finest we've ever had. Hallo, young Richards. Showing your father round the place, as if he didn't know every corner already?"

"It's good to have a son at my old school," said Alan's father.

"Well, he's a chip off the old block," said Mr. Luton. "I've told you that before sometime, haven't I, young Richards?"

"Yes, sir, you have," said Alan, and went his usual bright scarlet.

After supper, when the boys were talking over the events of the day, Terry spoke to Alan.

"I say, your father's super, isn't he? I spoke to him, and do you know, your father says . . ."

"Well, what does my father say?" said Alan, with a grin. "Go on—you tell *me* for a change! I'll listen to you all right."

"Your father says . . . your father says . . . your father says . . ." Alan went to sleep that night with the words ringing in his ears. And then the words changed to "A chip off the old block." Yes, that was better still!

In fact, as far as Alan was concerned, it was the best thing of all.



No. 5. MISS HANNAH'S ROUNDABOUT.

Miss Hannah came into the playroom to look for the children. They were all there, gazing mournfully out of the window. They turned round when she came in.

"Miss Hannah! Isn't it sickening? We were going to sail boats on the stream and now the rain's absolutely pouring down."

"Yes, it's very tiresome," said Miss Hannah. "I felt sorry for you so I've come up to see if you'd like to make something this afternoon."

"Oh yes! Something really exciting. Can you make absolutely anything, Miss Hannah?"

"Well," said Miss Hannah, "I think I can make most things. What do you want to make?"

"Er—let's think—oh, *I* know, a *roundabout!*" said Jack suddenly. "One that will really go round, a toy one. Can we make that, Miss Hannah?"

"Oh yes, I think so," said Miss Hannah. "We shall want some round pieces of cardboard, some cotton reels, and some wooden skewers. Go and ask Cook if she can let you have some skewers, Lucy. If not, we must make do with pieces of cane from the garden shed."

Lucy soon came back with a bunch of wooden meat skewers from the kitchen. Jane had found some small and large cotton reels. Jack had been sent to the odds and ends cupboard to see if he could find some round cardboard boxes. If not, they would have to cut circles from sheets of cardboard.

He found some old round chocolate boxes which Miss Hannah said would be just the thing. "Now," she said, "you can all do what I do. We will make a roundabout each. Take a large cotton reel—put your wooden skewer firmly into the hole in the reel. Now that's the middle post of our roundabout." (See Fig. 1.)

She gave each child a round cardboard box next. "Cut out a nice round platform about twelve inches in diameter," she said. "A platform for your roundabout, I mean. You can make it from the bottom of the box. Perhaps the bottom will do as it is, once you have taken the sides from it."

Soon they each had circles of cardboard in front of them. "Now make a hole exactly in the middle of your circle," said Miss Hannah. "And slip it over the wooden skewer, till it fits on to the reel. That's right. Does it turn easily? No, yours is a little tight, Lucy. Make your hole a bit bigger."

Soon all the platforms were turning easily on the skewers. "Now take off your platforms again," said Miss Hannah, "because we must put animals on them to make the roundabout look real. We'll cut some out of books and paste them round the edge."

So they spent ten minutes cutting out coloured animals from old books, and pasting them neatly round the edge of their "platforms".



Fig. 1

“Now put your platforms back again on the skewer, right down to the reel,” said Miss Hannah. “Aren’t they beginning to look gay? Now take a smaller cotton reel and slip it down the skewer so that it holds and steadies the platform.” (See Fig. 2)

All the “platforms” with their gay little roundabout

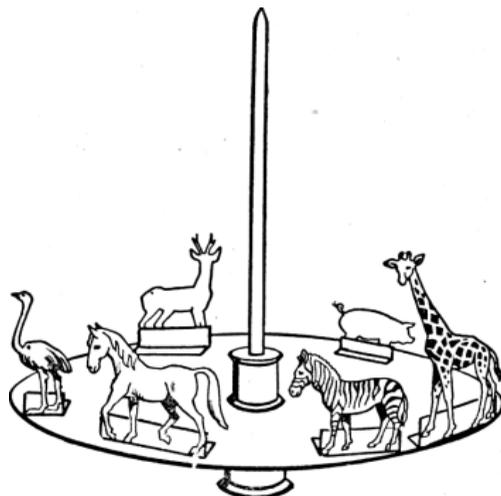


Fig. 2

animals were placed into position, with a second cotton reel above. “Now for the roundabout top,” said Miss Hannah. “We can use the lid of a round chocolate box for that, but we must make it as gay as possible. Let’s cut out a pretty edging to it and bend it downwards.”

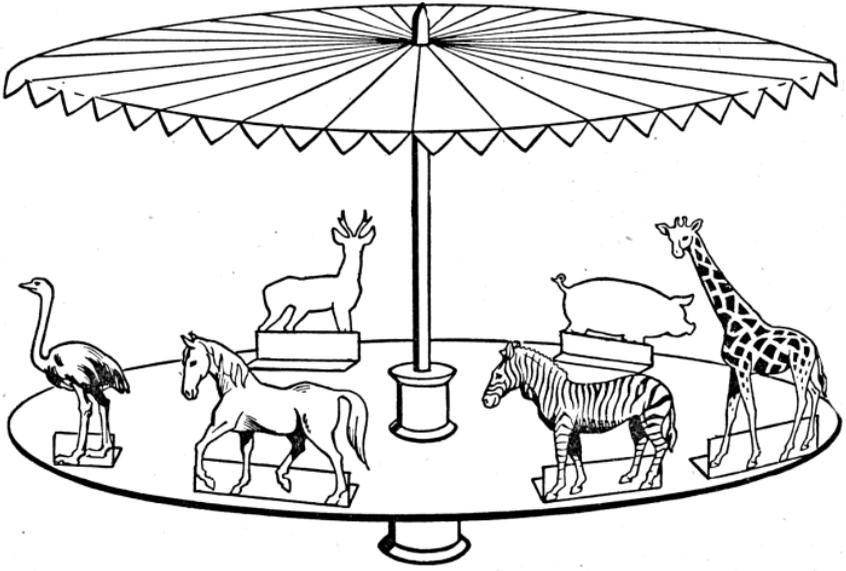
They decorated their roundabout tops as gaily as they could, and then cut out a pretty edging. “Now put your top on to the skewer,” said Miss Hannah. “Make a hole first, of course. If it doesn’t fit tightly we’ll put a spot of glue to hold it fast.”

Soon all the roundabout tops were on, and the roundabouts were finished. They looked really lovely! “Now make them go round,” said Miss Hannah, and gave her platform a twirl with her fingers. Round and round it went, with the little animals spinning in a circle just like a real roundabout.

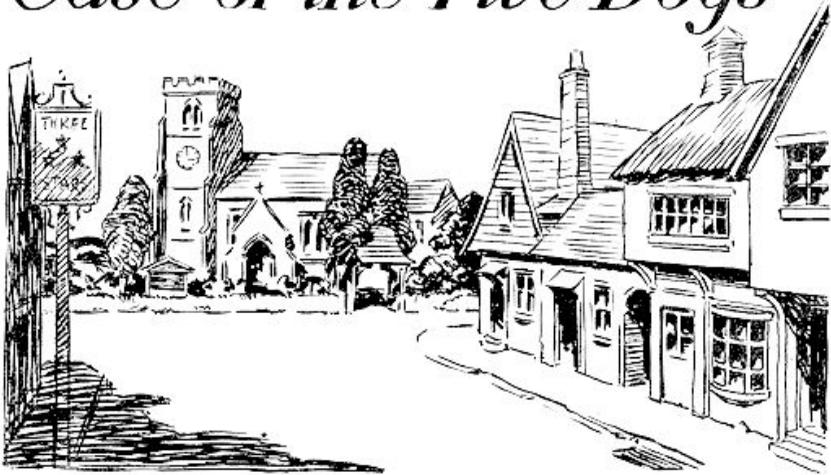
Jack, Jane and Lucy spun theirs, too. Then Jane got the little musical box and set it going whilst the roundabouts went gaily round.

“They look so *real!*” she said. “Oh, Miss Hannah, this is one of the nicest things we’ve made. Whoever would have thought it was so easy to make a roundabout!”

(For the next Rainy Afternoon, see page [187](#).)



Case of the Five Dogs



One day, when John was sitting reading in his garden, he heard his name called. He looked up and saw the face of a little girl peeping over the wall.

"Hallo, Meg—what do you want?" asked John.

"Oh John—can we come in for a minute. There's Colin here and George, and me and Katie. We want to talk to you."

"Come on over the wall then," said John, surprised. They all clambered over. Meg and Katie were ten, George and Colin were about twelve. With them were their dogs.

"What's up?" asked John. "I say, keep your dogs in order, won't you? Dad's just planted out some new things in the beds."

The boys and girls settled down on the grass, each holding the collar of their own dog. "You see, John, we know you're an awfully good detective," said George. "So we thought you might help us. Something awful has happened."

"What?" asked John, feeling rather important at being called an awfully good detective.

"This morning some of Farmer Warner's sheep were chased by dogs," said George. "One fell in the stream and broke its leg."

"And the farmer went to the police and he said it was *our* dogs that did it," said Katie, almost in tears. "He said one of his sheep was killed the other day by dogs, and he *saw* an Aberdeen like my Jock, a terrier like George's Sandy, a Sealyham like Meg's and a spaniel like Colin's in the road outside the field. So now he says it was our dogs that killed his sheep last week, and ours that chased them to-day."

"And perhaps they'll be shot," said Colin, gloomily. "Or else our fathers will be fined. But we *know* it wasn't our dogs."

"We want you to help us," said George. "You've got to prove that it was somebody else's dog, not ours, see? You're a clever enough detective for that, aren't you?"

"Well—I don't know," said John. "This isn't quite like any case I've had before. To begin with—*some* dog must have killed that sheep. If we could prove that first, we'd be halfway to saving *your* dogs. But we don't know what dog did it."

"Yes, we do," said Colin at once. "It was the log-man's dog—you know, the man who comes all round the district selling logs. He's got a horrible black dog, big and fierce and ugly."

"Oh, yes, I know it," said John. "It's the only dog I'm really scared of. It looks so fierce and it growls like anything if anyone goes near it. I always think it looks as bad-tempered as its master."

"Yes, that's the one," said Meg.



"We know you're an awfully good detective."

"But how do you know it's the dog that killed the sheep?" asked John. "Did you see it?"

"No, but we know someone who did," said George. "You know, there's a gypsy caravan near that field, and there are some children living there. One's called Julie, and we sometimes speak to her. She told us she saw the big black dog chase the sheep and kill it."

"Well then—that's easy! She's only got to tell the police that!" said John.

"She won't. She's afraid of the police. She says if we try to make her tell, she'll say she doesn't know anything," said Colin. "She says her father would beat her black and blue if she told anything to the police. They are so scared of policemen."

"I told the policeman who came about my dog that I knew it was the big black one belonging to the log-man," said George. "But when he came again he said the log-man said he wasn't in the district that evening, so it couldn't have been his dog, because it never leaves him."

"And now it's *our* dogs that are bearing the blame for everything!" said Meg, fiercely, putting her arms round her Sealyham. "Why, Scamp doesn't even chase *cats*! I'm not going to have him shot for something that isn't his fault."

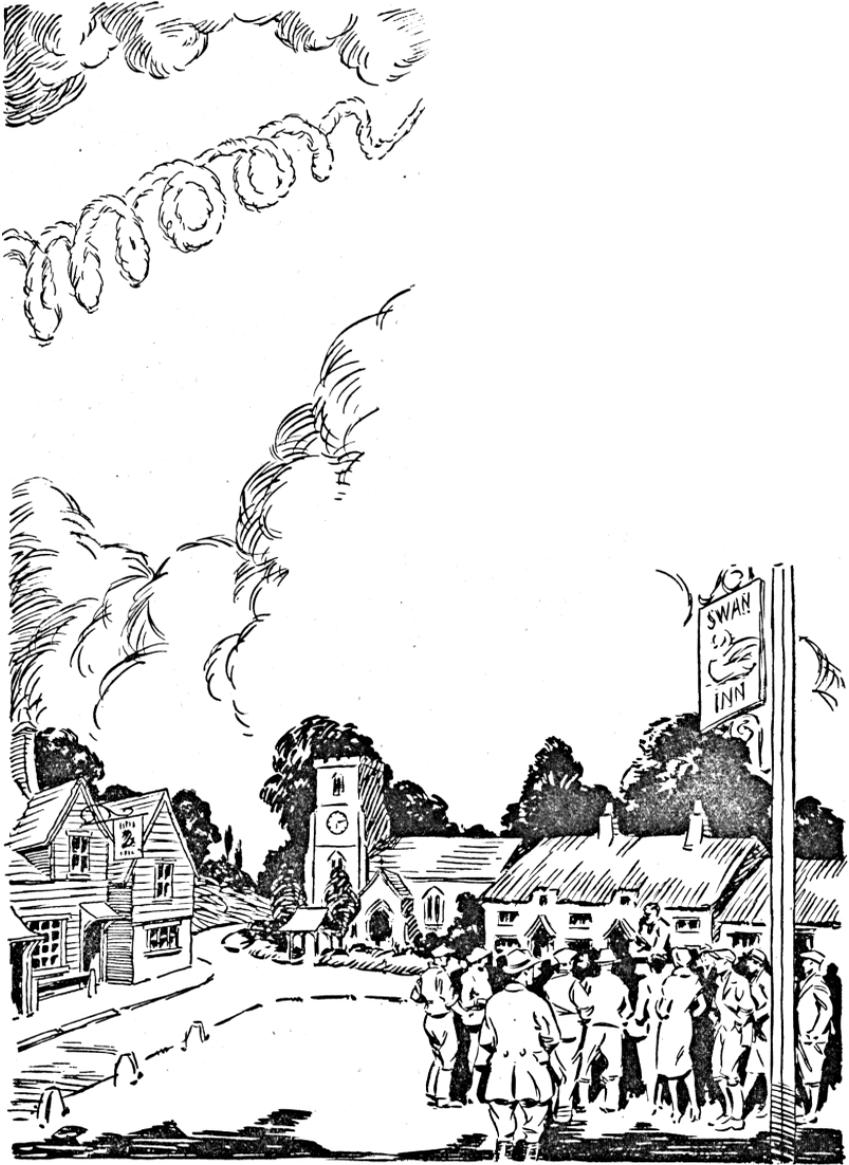
"So you see, John, you *must* do something!" said Katie. "We could only think of coming to you. Will you help us?"

"Yes, of course," said John, who was very fond of dogs. "But it's going to be difficult to make a man own up to his dog killing a sheep, if he's already said that neither he nor his dog were here that evening. Have you asked if anyone else saw him or his dog that evening near Farmer Warner's sheep field?"



"She told us she saw the big black dog chase the sheep and kill it."

“Yes, we’ve asked *everyone*,” said Colin. “But nobody did. You know, there was a big meeting on the green that night, and simply everyone was there. There might not have been a single person anywhere near the field when the sheep was killed—except Julie, and she won’t tell.”



“It wrote ‘Moon’ against the blue . . .”

“She ought to tell,” said Meg. “That dog once bit their baby. It’s still got the scar. Julie showed it to me.”

“It’s an awful dog,” said George. “It’ll end in killing somebody. John, can you do something?”

“Well, I’ll try,” said John. “But somehow I just don’t know how to begin. First—what day was the sheep killed?”

“Last Friday,” said Colin. “I was on the green with the others. We were listening to the speaker, and I was watching an aeroplane doing stunts in the sky. It wrote ‘Moon’ against the blue, and we all laughed, because it

was Mr. Moon who was speaking at the meeting. It was a jolly good advertisement for him. He wants everyone to vote for him, doesn't he?"

"Fancy hiring an aeroplane to write your name in the sky!" said Meg. "I wish one would write mine. I'd feel very important."

"Well, let's get back to our subject," said John. "The sheep was killed on Friday. Julie says she saw the log-man's black dog kill it. The log-man says he wasn't here and neither was his dog. Where does he say he was, I wonder?"

"He swears he was fifteen miles away," said Colin. "Out on his bicycle, he says. He'd sold all his logs that day, and went to speak to a man at Five-Mile-Hill about timber, but he wasn't there. Anyway, the log-man swears he was miles and miles away from here. He says his dog loped along beside his bike all the way. So there you are!"

"Did Julie see the log-man as well as his black dog, on Friday when the dog killed the sheep?" said John.

"No. But she said she heard his peculiar whistle, when he whistled to the dog to come to him," said Colin. "You know his whistle? It's awfully loud and shrill. He puts two fingers in his mouth when he does it. Julie can do it too. But I can't."

"Well—it looks as if the dog *and* the man were there on Friday then, when everyone else was on the green listening to Mr. Moon," said John. "But how in the world can we prove it?"

"The log-man is coming again to-morrow," said Meg, suddenly. "It's his day for our village. Couldn't you talk to him, John?"

"Well . . ." said John, and stopped. He didn't like the log-man, and he didn't think the log-man would like him, either. And he certainly didn't like the log-man's dog. It gave him a horrid feeling when the big black creature sniffed round his ankles. He felt as if at any moment it might take a bite out of his leg. "Oh, please, please do," said Meg. "We'll come and be with you, if you like. But we'd better leave our dogs at home, or that awful black dog will gobble them up!"

"Yes, for goodness sake don't bring your dogs," said John, picturing a free fight between them and the black dog going on all round him. "All right. I'll think of something to say to him. You can all be with me and listen to what he says."

The log-man always went to the village inn, when he was near, and brought out a drink for himself. He sat down on the log bench beside the green in the evening sunshine, and ate bread and jam and drank his beer. His dog always lay at his feet.

"He'll be there about six o'clock," said John. "I often see him there then. We'll be playing about, and I'll go up and try to draw him into conversation. You can all listen hard. But don't mention the word 'dogs' or he'll be on his guard."

"Right," said Colin. "He doesn't know any of us. Now mind, everybody—leave your dogs at home so that they can't get out."

John was a bit worried about this new problem. It wasn't like his others at all. He didn't see how to tackle it, no matter how hard he puzzled about it. He lay in bed that night and pondered over it.

Julie had seen the dog killing the sheep and had heard the log-man whistling to him that Friday evening. Therefore he must have been there. But he said he was miles and miles away. Everyone else, unfortunately, seemed to have been on the green, listening to Mr. Moon, and looking at his name being written in the sky. It was fortunate for the log-man that nobody was anywhere near Farmer Warner's field that evening!

After a long while John made a plan. He didn't think it was very good—but it just might work. He'd see.



They began to play a game with a bat and a ball.

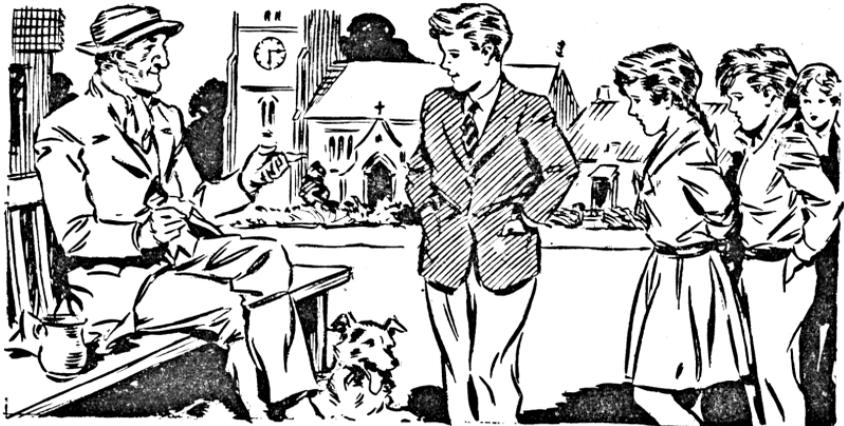
So, the next evening, about six o'clock, he, Meg, Katie, Colin and George went to the green, near the Rose and Crown Inn. They began to play a game with a bat and ball. No dog was near. All had been left safely at home.

"Here's the log-man now," said John, in a low voice. "See, there's his cart. He's driving his old brown horse, and that awful black dog is sitting up beside him just as he always does."

The cart drew up outside the inn. The man got down and went inside. He came out with a tankard and went to sit in the evening sunshine on a wooden bench beside the green. He pulled a packet of sandwiches out of his pocket.

"We'll give him a minute or two, then I'll go up and ask if he knows the time," said John, and threw the ball to Colin. All the children kept an eye on the black dog. He lay beside his master, but they felt that at any moment he might go after their ball.

In a little while John went up to the log-man, followed by the others. "Could you please tell me the time?" he asked.



"Could you please tell me the time?" he asked.

"Look at the church clock," said the log-man, in a surly voice. Blow! John had forgotten that the church clock could be seen from the green.

"Oh, yes, of course—thanks," he said. "A quarter past six," he said to the others. Then he looked at the black dog.

"Fine big dog you've got," he said, politely. "I bet he eats a lot. Can he catch rabbits?"

The log-man looked at him. "My dog don't chase nothing," he said. "He don't chase even a sparrow. He just keeps alongside of me."

"But surely he would chase a cat?" said Colin, joining in. "All dogs chase cats."

"Well, this one don't," said the log-man. "He don't chase nothing."

The dog looked at them out of bloodshot eyes and growled.

"He won't bite, will he?" said Meg, retreating hastily.

"Never bit anyone in his life," said the log-man. "Best-tempered dog I ever had."

The dog growled again and showed yellow teeth. None of the children liked him at all.

"Is he afraid of anything?" asked John. "You know—afraid of guns or noises or anything like that? Some dogs are."

"No. He ain't afraid of nothing," said the log-man.

"I knew a dog once that was scared stiff of aeroplanes," said John.

"Mine don't mind nothing," said the log-man and took a long drink.

"I think I can hear an aeroplane now," said John. "Oh no—it's a car. I say—have you heard of those aeroplanes that can write in the sky? I wish I could see one!"

"You did see one—don't you remember—it wrote MOON in the sky," said Colin, astonished at John's forgetfulness.

"No—surely it wrote SUN," said John. "Wait a bit—yes—I'm remembering—it wrote SUN, didn't it?"

"Gah—it wrote MOON, of course," said the log-man, munching hard. "Can't you read, then? It wrote MOON plain as anything. That's a wonderful thing that is, to write in smoke in the sky."

"Let's see—it was a white aeroplane, wasn't it?" said John, as if he was trying hard to remember. But everyone put him right.

"No, it was one of those silvery-grey ones, it was, really!"

John appealed to the log-man. "It wasn't, was it? It was white."

"You're wrong," said the log-man, and took another sandwich. "It was grey. Saw it as clear as could be. *And* the markings too—L.G.O. they were, whatever they might mean. My eyes are as good as yours any day."

He got up, emptied the dregs from his tankard on to the grass and went into the inn. He came out again, followed by his dog, and climbed up to his cart. Without so much as a wave he drove off.

The children crowded round John. Only Colin had seen how his little plan had worked. The others hadn't.

"John—how very, very clever of you—to lead the conversation round to aeroplanes like that—and to make him say he'd seen that one writing MOON in the sky, and to make him describe it too!"

"Well—but what's so clever about all that?" said Meg.

"Can't you see, silly? That 'plane came over on Friday evening, and *only* Friday evening—and the log-man said he was miles away! Well, how could he have seen that aeroplane writing in the sky, if he wasn't here?"

There was a silence. John and Colin looked triumphantly round. "There you are!" said John. "He's admitted he was here—and we've got five witnesses. Come on, we'll go to the police station."

And off they all went. John's friend the sergeant was there, and he took them into his room, looking amused. He listened to their whole story without interrupting once. Then he made a few notes.



"And very smart work too, Detective John."

"Very interesting," he said, "very, very interesting. And very smart work too, Detective John. We will follow this up and ask the log-man how he managed to see this aeroplane doing its tricks when he was fifteen miles away."

The children next went to Julie. They told her what had happened. "Suppose the log-man admits he and his dog were here, will you say what you saw?" asked Colin. "You must, you know—because you'll be a proper witness then."

Julie looked scared. "Will I get into trouble if I don't say?" she asked.

"Yes, awful trouble!" said John, hard-heartedly. "Oh, Julie—surely you will speak up for our dogs—you wouldn't want them to be shot, would you, instead of a wicked dog that has killed a sheep and already bitten your baby?"

"Well, all right then," said Julie. So when a policeman called, Julie told him all she had seen, and, armed with this, and the other information the children had given him, the sergeant went off to interview the log-man.

He came back again in his car, and saw the children gathered together on the green, waiting for him. This time they had their dogs with them.

He stopped his car. The children crowded round him. "Well, he's confessed," said the sergeant. "He *was* in the district, his dog *was* with him, it did go for the sheep, and then he whistled it off. He says he didn't know a sheep was killed at the time, and was too afraid to confess when he did hear. I don't know about that. Anyway, what do you think that dog did?"

"What?" asked the children. The sergeant showed them a bandaged leg.

"Took a nip out of *me!*" he said. "Silly thing to do, wasn't it? He's going to be punished for all his misdeeds, you may be sure—and your dogs can now go home without a stain on their character—thanks to good old Detective John!"

"Woof," said the dogs at once. "Woof!" And they tried to lick John as if they did honestly understand what he had done for them. He really is a very good detective, isn't he?



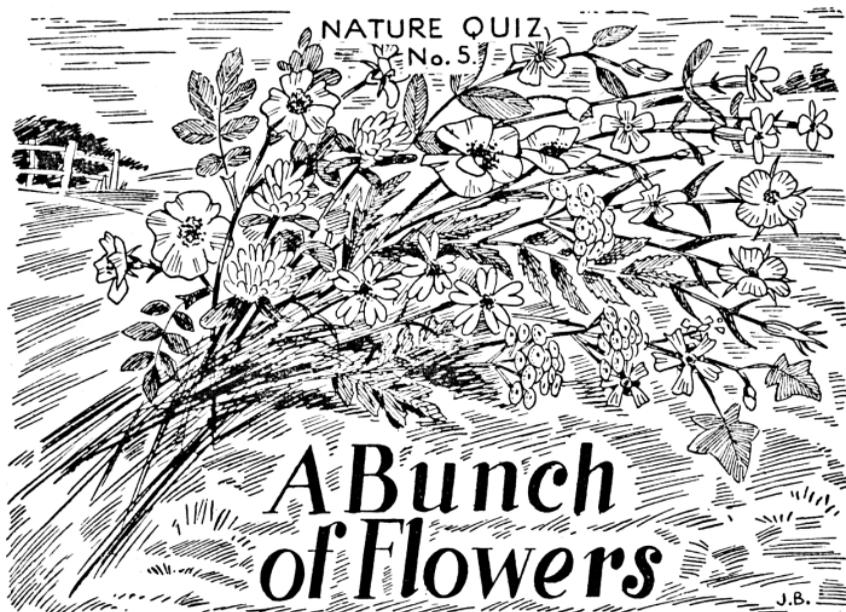
TEA-TIME

When I come in at tea-time
I am so pleased to see
The fire crackling loudly,
The table laid for tea.

There's honey on the table
And bread-and-butter too,
And currant buns and biscuits
And seed-cake nice and new.

There's Mother at the table
Just pouring out the tea,
And Baby in her high chair
Waiting there for me.

It is so nice and homey
With Mother smiling there,
I think our little family
Is the nicest anywhere!



It was a dull November day. The four children were gathered round the fire. They had been playing games and reading, and now they felt rather bored.

“What about a quiz?” said Richard. “Would your mother come and give us another, Jack?”

“We’ll see,” said Jack, and he went to find his mother. She soon came along with her knitting, and sat down close to them. “So you want another quiz?” she said. “Well let’s do it differently this time. We’ll have a Common Flower quiz, shall we—but we’ll *each* take it in turn to describe one, instead of only me.”

“Oh yes—we’ll do it that way,” said Joan. “But don’t let’s have *very, very* common flowers, Mrs. Robins—they’ll be too easy. Let’s choose some that everybody *ought* to know.”

“Right. We’ll leave out buttercups, daisies, violets, primroses, thistles and dandelions,” said Mrs. Robins. “Everyone knows those, I should think. Now—I’ll begin, shall I? Find it in February or March, growing in big patches. It has eight glossy golden petals, and . . .”

“Buttercup,” said Richard, without thinking.

“*Eight* petals—and early spring—and anyway we’ve ruled out buttercups,” said Mrs. Robins. “Do *listen*, Richard. Eight glossy golden petals, and heart-shaped leaves.”

“Celandine, of course!” said Alice at once. “Now my turn, as I guessed. Another yellow flower, a little like a tiny dandelion. It has scaly stalks, a bit woolly.”

There was a pause. What could it be? “What are its leaves like?” asked Joan.

“Hasn’t got any,” said Alice, promptly.

“But it *must* have,” said Jack. “Don’t be silly.”

“I’m not. I’ve never found any when I picked the flower,” said Alice.

“Ah, I know!” said Mrs. Robins. “You mean the little yellow coltsfoot, Alice. It has no leaves when the flowers are out. They come later. That was a good flower to choose.”

“Now you again, Mother,” said Joan. “You guessed.”

“Well, now here’s a flower with no *petals*,” said Mother. “And yet it looks exactly as if it had six lovely white petals, tinged with pink or purple. It dances in the April woods.”

“Funny!” said Richard. “A flower without petals that looks as if it had some. What’s it got, then?”

“It has taken its sepals and turned them into petals,” said Mrs. Robins. “And it dances so beautifully in the wind.”



“Wind-flower!” cried the girls.

“Wood anemone!” yelled Jack.

“Both of you are right,” said his mother. “You can have a turn, Alice.”

“This is very, very common,” said Alice, beaming. “It grows all the year round. It has tiny white flowers at the top of a spike, but you’ll see its seed-vessels better than its flowers, because they’re set all the way down the stalk.”

“Gracious—what can it be?” wondered Jack. “What shape are the seed-vessels?”

“Like little purses, or wallets,” said Alice, and that made Jack call out the name.

“Shepherd’s Purse, of course! Now it’s my turn. I’m thinking of a very common flower. It has green flowers in strings, and you can find it in February or March.”

“Green flowers? Do you mean the nettle?” asked Alice.

“Wrong,” said Jack. “The nettle doesn’t flower in February or March, silly.”

“Oh, I know—what is it now—it’s Dog’s Mercury!” cried Joan, and everyone clapped.

“Good,” said Mrs. Robins. “It’s certainly a very common flower, but not one that people notice very much. Your turn, Joan.”

“A brilliant blue flower, with four small petals and a tiny middle like a white eye,” said Joan. Richard gave a shout.

“Speedwell, speedwell.”

“Which one?” asked Joan.

“Germander,” said Richard, feeling very clever. “Now my turn. I’m thinking of a queer plant with a title, and . . .”

“With a *title*—what do you mean, silly?” said Jack.

“With a title, and a tongue in the middle of a green hood,” said

Richard. “The leaves are arrow-shaped and have purple blotches on them.”

“Oh—I know—the Common Arum,” said Mrs. Robins. “But what do you mean—a plant with a *title*?”

“Well, it’s called Lords and Ladies, isn’t it?”

J.B. said Richard,

triumphantly. “Very titled!”

“Idiot,” said everyone. “Your turn, Mother.”

“Well, here’s a flower for you to guess, it’s found all along the hedge-side in spring. It has five notched petals, and a dainty head hanging from a thread-like stalk. Its stem is very weak indeed.”

Silence. What could it be? Nobody could guess.

“It gets its name from the thread-like stalk its head hangs on,” said Mrs. Robins, “as thin as a stitch.”

“Oh—Stitchwort!” cried Alice. “Of course. Hurrah—my turn now! My flower’s got clusters of tiny white four-petalled flowers at the top of its tall stalk.”

“Shepherd’s purse,” said Richard at once.

“We’ve *had* that,” said Alice.

“Well, you might give us a bit more help,” said Richard. “You haven’t told us much.”

“All right. It’s got large heart-shaped leaves—and when you crush them in your hand they smell of garlic,” said Alice.

“Garlic-Mustard!” cried Jack.

“Jack-by-the-Hedge!” cried the rest.

“Quite right,” said Alice. “Jack, you got the most correct name. You choose now.”

“Well, I’m thinking of a frothy, lacy plant that fills the hedges in June,” said Jack. “It has very tiny white flowers growing on thin green spokes like the ribs of an umbrella.”

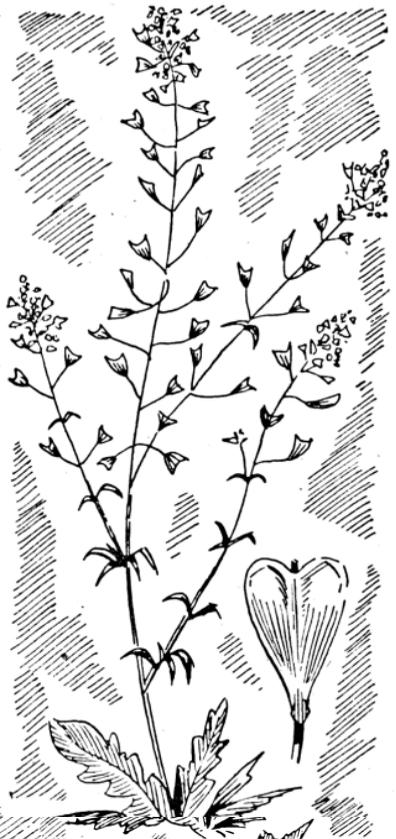
“Goodness!” said Alice, “do you mean Hedge Parsley by any chance?”

“I do,” said Jack. “Jolly good, Alice.”

“My turn,” said Alice, thinking hard. “Well, what’s this flower? It wears a green hat before it’s out, but it throws it off. It has four silky petals and lots of black-headed stamens.”

“What colour is it?” asked Jack.

“Scarlet,” said Alice.





“Poppy!” shouted Richard, deafening everyone. “Good—my turn. I’ll give you a teaser. It’s got clusters of sweet-pea-shaped flowers with red streaks, and its leaflets are in fives.”

“Fives? Then it can’t be one of the trefoils,” said Alice, “because their leaflets are in threes. And yet it *sounds* like one.”

“What are its seed-pods like?” asked Mrs. Robins, suddenly.

“Well—they’re rather like a bird’s foot,” said Richard, grinning.



"Oh, Richard—it's Bird's-foot Trefoil, of course," said Mrs. Robins. "And you're perfectly right, the leaflets are in fives not threes. How clever of you to have noticed that. You nearly beat us there."

"Your turn, Mother," said Alice.

"Well—I'm thinking of a plant that is just like a collection of little yellow buttons," said Mrs. Robins. "In fact it looks as if someone had pulled all its petals off, leaving just the round yellow middles. Its leaves look rather ferny."

"Do you mean the Tansy?" said Joan, thinking hard. "That's the only flower I can think of that seems to have no petals and is button-shaped."

"Quite right, Joan," said Mrs. Robins. "Now you think of one."

"Mine's a yellow flower too," said Joan, "rather showy and handsome. Its petals are pale yellow and open into a starry-shaped flower."

"That's *really* not enough description, is it, Mother?" said Jack. "We can't guess it from that. There are so many yellow flowers."

"Well—I'll give you a bit more help then," said Joan. "If you hold up the leaves to the light you will see there are little clear dots all over them."

"Oh, now I know," said Mrs. Robins, though nobody else did. "St. John's Wort, Joan. You can always tell it by holding up the leaves."

"Good, Mrs. Robins," said Joan. "We just can't beat *you*."

"A very pretty flower comes to my mind," said Mrs. Robins. "You'll find it in summer-time. It has bright blue flowers, really vivid, with a ring of strap-shaped petals. Its stem is very, very tough."

"Bluebell," said Richard. The others booed him. "How *can* it be, silly? It's got strap-shaped petals and a *tough* stem!"

"Chicory, chicory, chicory!" chanted Joan, and chicory it was. "Now I've got a good one for you. It flowers as the winter comes on, in big clusters of greeny-yellow."

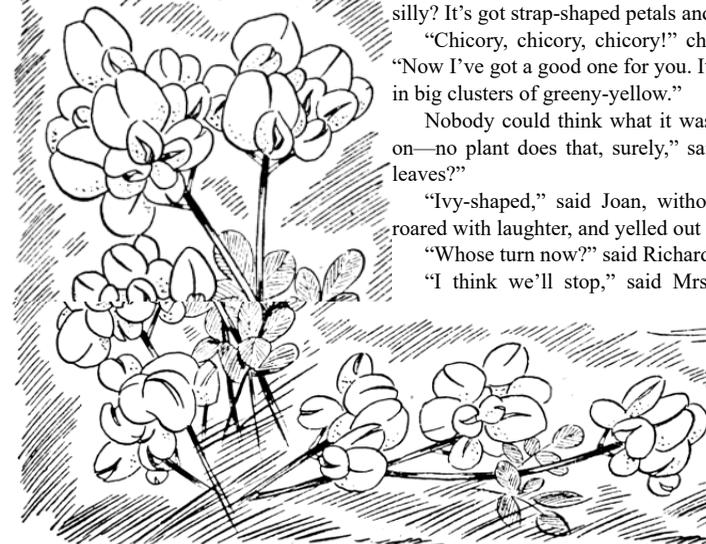
Nobody could think what it was. "Flowers as the *winter* comes on—no plant does that, surely," said Richard. "What shape are its leaves?"

"Ivy-shaped," said Joan, without thinking, and then everyone roared with laughter, and yelled out the name. "Ivy, of course!"

"Whose turn now?" said Richard. "We all shouted together."

"I think we'll stop," said Mrs. Robins. "It's tea-time. Come

along and sit down at the table and I'll give you a little tea-time quiz. I'm thinking of something white and greasy, that wants spreading with something



yellow and sticky, and . . ."

"Bread and butter and honey!" shouted the children and sat down at the table. "Lovely!"

"I'm thinking of something pretty and nice and good enough to eat," said Richard, suddenly. "It's got eyes rather like speedwell's, and it makes very nice noises. And its name makes you think it belongs to the bird family.

What is it?"

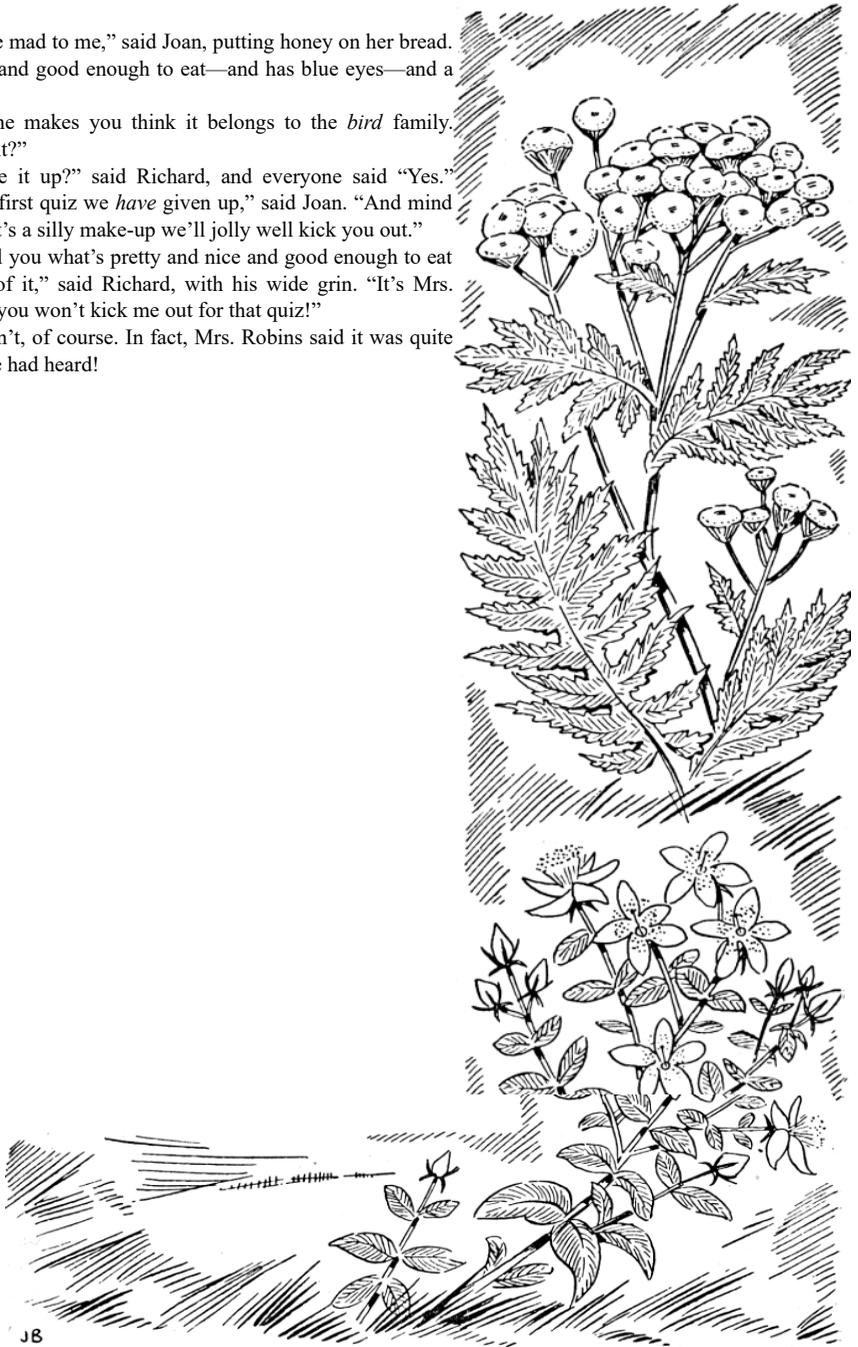
"Sounds quite mad to me," said Joan, putting honey on her bread. "Pretty and nice and good enough to eat—and has blue eyes—and a nice voice . . ."

"And its name makes you think it belongs to the *bird* family. Richard, what is it?"

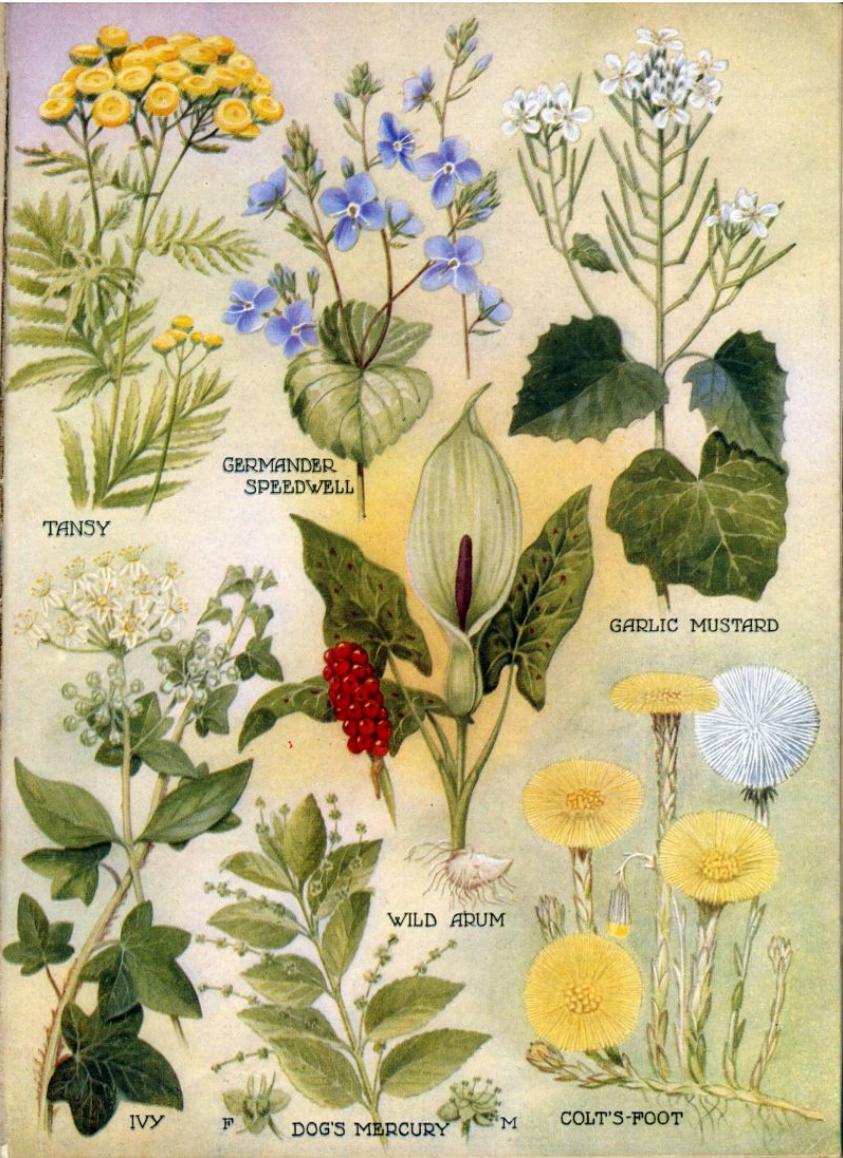
"Do you give it up?" said Richard, and everyone said "Yes." "Though it's the first quiz we *have* given up," said Joan. "And mind you, Richard, if it's a silly make-up we'll jolly well kick you out."

"Well, I'll tell you what's pretty and nice and good enough to eat and all the rest of it," said Richard, with his wide grin. "It's Mrs. Robins and I bet you won't kick me out for that quiz!"

And they didn't, of course. In fact, Mrs. Robins said it was quite the nicest one she had heard!







TANSY

GERMANDER
SPEEDWELL

GARLIC MUSTARD

WILD ARUM

IVY

F DOG'S MERCURY M

COLT'S-FOOT

FRANSELL



WOOD ANEMONE



FIELD POPPY



ST. JOHN'S WORT



LESSER CELANDINE



BIRD'S-FOOT
TREFOIL

SHEPHERD'S PURSE



GREATER STITCHWORT



No. 6. MISS HANNAH'S AQUARIUM.

"Miss Hannah! Look, we've been to the pond. See what we've brought back!" called Lucy.

Miss Hannah looked up from her sewing. She saw the jam-jars the children held in their hands. "Oh, how lovely!" she said. "You've been fishing. Bring your jars to me and let me see what is in them."

Jack brought his first. "I've got frog-spawn," he said. "Look, it's just like jelly, but stronger and more slippery than the jelly we have at dinner-time. Miss Hannah, do you see the little black middles in the round jelly eggs? They will hatch out into black tadpoles."

"Miss Hannah knows that, silly," said Lucy. "Look, I've got some snails, Miss Hannah, some curly ones, and some whose shells go up to a sharp point."

"They're very fine snails," said Miss Hannah. "And whatever have you got, Jane?"

"A beetle," said Jane. "A great big one. He was swimming about at the top of the water, his black back bobbing just under the surface. Isn't he enormous? Will he bite me?"

"Oh, no," said Miss Hannah. "He lives on green stuff in the pond. He's harmless to you and to the fish and the tadpoles, too. It's a good thing you didn't get the smaller beetle that lives in the pond, though—the dytiscus—he is very fierce indeed, and would gobble up the tadpoles as soon as they hatched. The one you caught is the great black water-beetle, a nice creature to have."

"These jam-jars are awfully small," said Jack. "I wish we had an aquarium."

"Well—shall we make one?" said Miss Hannah, putting away her sewing. "You'll love it. It's quite easy."

"Really?" said Lucy, in delight. "Oh, do let's! An aquarium that will keep our tadpoles and beetle and snails and water-weed all nicely together!"

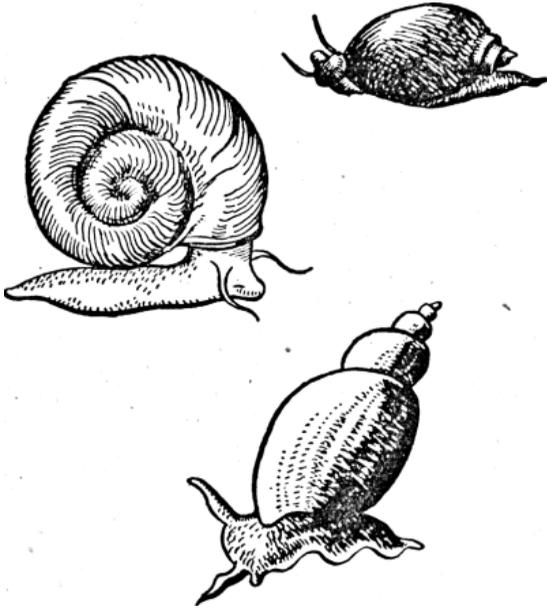
"How do we begin?" said Jack. "We haven't enough money to buy an aquarium. They're awfully expensive."

"Well, we will use an old wireless accumulator tank," said Miss Hannah. "I saw one in the attic the other day when I was up there. I'll go and get it. If it's broken we'll go down to the wireless shop and see if they will sell us a tank for a few shillings."

But it wasn't broken. Miss Hannah brought it down and showed it to the children. "Now," she said, "we must make our aquarium as much like a real little pond as we can. What shall we need for it? What did you see at the bottom of the pond where you went fishing?"

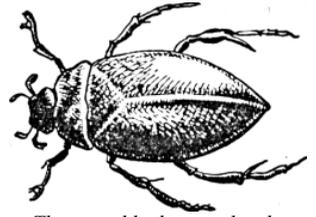
"There was sand," said Jack. "And heaps of little stones. And here and there were bigger stones, with little fish hiding behind them."

"And water-weed growing up like a garden," said Lucy. "Oh, Miss Hannah, we can make our aquarium look just like a tiny pond! Shall I get some sand?"



"Some curly ones and some whose shells go up to a sharp point."

"Yes, go and ask the gardener for some," said Miss Hannah. "And you, Jack, go and find some small



The great black water-beetle.

stones or pebbles in the garden. You'll find plenty in the gravel paths. Wash them well and bring them here. Jane, you find some stones, too. I want you to tie one at the bottom of each piece of water-weed."

"But why?" asked Jane, astonished.

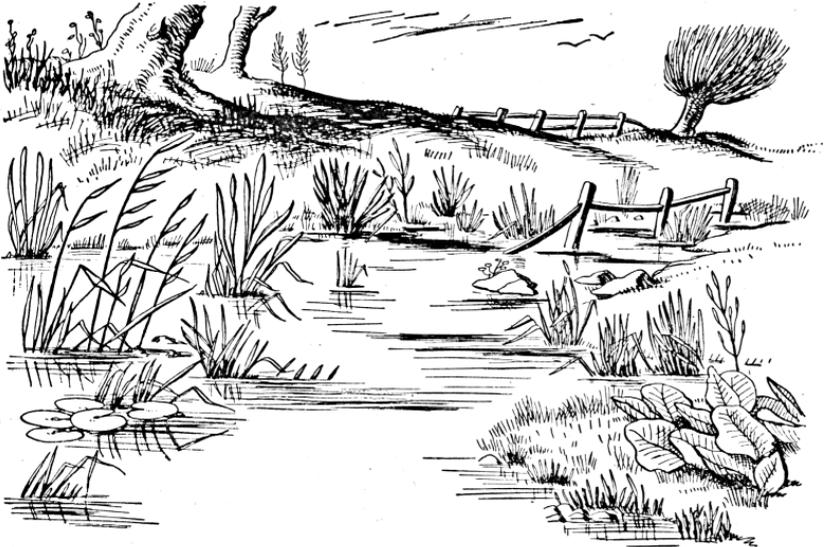
"So that when we put the weed in, the stone will pull the end of the stem down to the bottom of our tank and the weed will then float upright and look exactly as if it is growing," said Miss Hannah. "Now, you go and do your jobs whilst I wash out the tank. It's dreadfully dirty."

"It's going to rain in a minute," said Lucy, hurrying off. "I'll be as quick as I can."

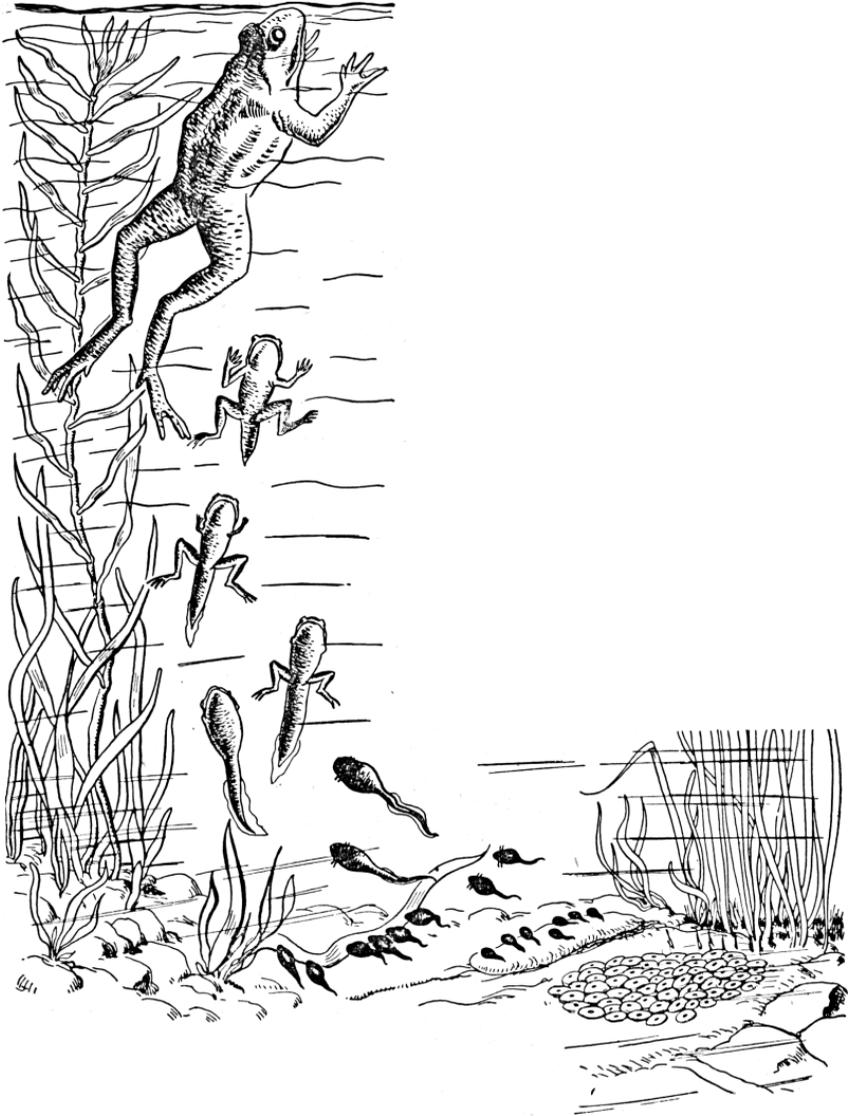
"Making an aquarium is a lovely thing to do on a rainy afternoon," said Miss Hannah. "Now,

you go and get your stones, Jack. Hurry up!"

Soon they were all back again. Lucy had a pot of sand, the cleanest she could get. Jack had found lots of small pebbles and had washed them clean. They looked shiny and smooth. He had also found some big flints, one or two with holes in. "These are rather like some we saw in the pond," he said. "We can build them up a bit at the back of the tank, can't we, Miss Hannah?"



“Look—I’ve tied about fifteen bits of water-weed to stones,” said Jane. “It was fiddlely sort of work, but it’s done. Now can we put the water into the tank, Miss Hannah?”



See how the frog grows from a tiny black speck—what fun to watch this happen.

“Oh, no! We must put the sand in first,” said Miss Hannah, laughing. “Lucy, you can put it in. Lay it along the bottom of the tank—that’s right, shake it out. About an inch and a half thick. Smooth it to the same level all over. Good, that looks nice.”

“Now my pebbles,” said Jack. “I’m going to put them in one by one, if you don’t mind, Miss Hannah. I want them to look just right.”

The girls got rather impatient with Jack. He took a long time to arrange his smooth little pebbles, but at last there were two or three rows of them piled neatly on the sand. “It’s beginning to look nice,” said Lucy. “What next, Miss Hannah?”

“The water!” said Miss Hannah. “Here’s a big jug full. We shall have to pour six or seven jugsful in. We’ll leave a few inches at the top—don’t fill the tank right up.”

Jack took the jug. “Wait a minute!” said Miss Hannah. “If you pour it straight in, on to the sand and pebbles, you will force the stones out of place, and disturb the sand so that it makes the water all cloudy.”

“Well, but how can we stop that?” said Jack.

“Look—if we put this piece of thick brown paper in—like this, resting on the bottom—and then pour the water gently on to the paper, the water will fill the tank without moving a single stone or disturbing the sand,” said Miss Hannah. “Pour the water in now, Jack.”

Jack poured it on to the paper. “Oh! Look! The pond is beginning to come!” cried Lucy, watching the water rise in the tank. “The paper’s rising up, too—it’s keeping on the surface. That was a clever idea of yours, Miss Hannah!”

The children poured in seven jugsful of water. The tank was then full enough. Miss Hannah took out the soaked brown paper. “Now,” she said to Jane, “put in your water-weed, Jane. Drop each piece in gently. The stone at the end will sink to the bottom, pulling the water-weed with it.”

Jane dropped in the weed. Soon there was quite a little forest of weed floating upright in the water.

“It looks simply lovely!” said Lucy. “Oh, Miss Hannah—aren’t we making a fine aquarium!”

“Now I want to put in my flints,” said Jack. “I’ll make a nice little pile here at the back—with one poking out of the water for the baby frogs to sit on when they have grown.”

He built a little pile of flints. They looked very fine. “And now we’ll put in the frog-spawn, the snails and the big black beetle!” said Jane. “Put in the spawn first.”

So in went a small piece of the jelly, with about fifteen little black egg-specks in it—they would hatch out into tiny black tadpoles in a day or two. What fun!

“And now for my snails,” said Lucy, and she popped them in. They sank to the bottom. “They will soon be at home and they’ll crawl about happily.”

“Yes—and they will keep the tank nice and clean,” said Miss Hannah. “They will eat any rubbish, and they will rasp off the slime that forms on the glass sides, with their ribbon-like tongues.”

“Here goes my water-beetle!” said Jane, and he went in with a plop! He swam about most energetically and raced through the water-weed at top speed.

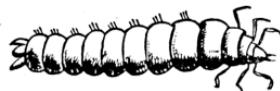
“He likes his new pond very much,” said Lucy. “Miss Hannah, none of our creatures will eat the others, will they?”

“Oh, no,” said Miss Hannah. “We could find another creature too, that will live happily with these—the queer little caddis-grub that makes itself a case of armour for its soft body. We’ll go to the pond the next fine day and bring some back.”

“I’ll go every single day and bring back a bottle of pond-water,” said Jack. “Pond-water is full of water-life, isn’t it, Miss Hannah? The tadpoles can feed on the tiny creatures I bring back in the water. I say—isn’t our aquarium lovely!”

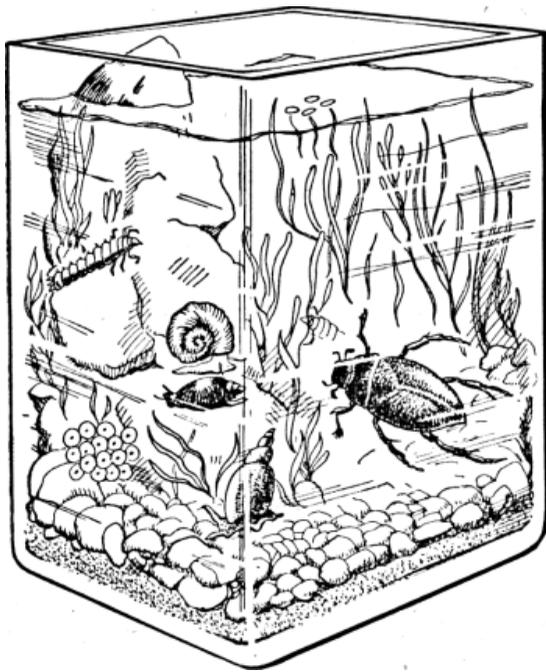
“We’ll keep a goldfish or two in it when the tadpoles have hatched out, grown into frogs, and been put into the garden,” said Miss Hannah.

“Oh, I’d like that!” said Jane. “Miss Hannah, this is the nicest thing we’ve ever done on a rainy afternoon!”



Caddis grubs.

(See colour plate facing page [151](#))



The Lonely Old House



Harry, Cathy and Dick had come to stay at their little seaside cottage, not far from Kely Cliffs. They loved it, because it was so near the cliff-path that led down to the beach, and had such a glorious view of the sea.

This was the third year they had come there, but this time Mother and Daddy hadn't come. They had gone to Ireland to see Mother's sister, who was ill. So Miss Truman, their mother's old governess, had come to be with them in the cottage.

"I like Miss Truman, but she doesn't really seem to listen to anything we say," complained Cathy. "She's so busy with the cooking and the shopping and the mending that she just says 'Yes, dear, really,' or 'No, dear, really,' all the time."

"Well, never mind," said Harry. "It suits *me*! We can do just what we like. Miss Truman never seems to mind anything. Anyway, it's gorgeous here."

So it was. The weather was fine and hot, the bathing was good, they had a very old boat of their own, and there were lovely walks all round.

There were no houses near them at all except one. This was a big old house set in tall trees not very far away. Each year it had been empty, and the children now took no notice of it at all. It just stood there, silent and gloomy, with no one going up the drive or down.

And then one day something happened that made the children suddenly take an interest in the old empty house. They went with Kim, their Airedale, for a walk. They passed near the empty house, set round with high walls. Then Kim suddenly darted off, barking.

"A rabbit," said Harry. "Poor old Kim. He never will learn that rabbits won't wait for him. Hi, Kim! Come here."

But Kim didn't come, and from his excited barking the children imagined that he really did have hopes of a rabbit. They walked on a little way, and then whistled Kim again.

"Blow him!" said Harry. "Now we'll have to go and drag him backwards out of a rabbit-hole. One of these days he really will get stuck half-way down."

They went to look for Kim, and then suddenly they came on something they had never seen before. It was a queer little tumble-down house made of the white stone of the district. It stood there among the trees, covered with ivy and moss, its roof gone, and its one window without glass.

"What a funny little place," said Harry, going up to it. "Whatever was it built here for?"

"This wood once belonged to that old empty house," said Cathy. "Mother told me so. I expect it was a summer-house or something, built for the people who used to live there long ago."

"Kim's inside!" said Dick. "He must have chased a rabbit there. Kim, come here."

But Kim was very busy scraping hard at the floor of the little stone house. The rabbit had run into the house and disappeared. Therefore it must still be there, and Kim meant to scrape up the whole floor rather than lose it! He was a very persistent dog.

He had scraped away the moss and earth from part of the floor. Dick went up to take hold of his collar, and then stopped in surprise. Kim had scraped away quite a hole—and at the bottom of it was a flat stone—and in the stone was an iron handle!

“Look—that’s a bit funny,” said Dick, pointing it out to the others. “See? Kim’s scraped away the earth and come to the stone floor—and there’s an iron handle in that particular stone flag. I wonder why?”

“Ooooh—it’s jolly queer,” said Cathy at once. “Usually stones with iron handles in them are meant to be lifted up—like trap-doors. Oh, Harry, don’t let’s go for a walk—let’s dig down and explore a bit.”

“No. We shan’t find anything, and shall get ourselves dirty and tired out,” said Harry. “There’s probably nothing in it at all. Come on.”

“Oh no, Harry—do let’s just scrape away all the earth and see if there *is* anything exciting,” begged Dick. “I’ve read heaps of adventure stories, but I’ve never had an adventure myself. This might lead to one.”

“Don’t be silly,” said Harry. He was thirteen, and thought the twelve-year-old Dick rather babyish. “Come on, Kim.”

“Well, you go for a walk alone!” called Cathy, crossly. “I shall stay with Dick—and maybe we *shall* have an adventure—and we’ll jolly well have it without you!”

Harry snorted, and, with Kim at his heels, he went on by himself. Silly kids! Let them stay and make themselves into a mess if they wanted to.

Cathy and Dick stared down at the stone, with its iron handle. “Shall we go back and get our spades?” said Cathy, eagerly. “We can’t do it with our hands.”

“Yes, let’s,” said Dick. “And we’ll bring a torch too.”

“What for?” asked Cathy.

“Well—you never know,” said Dick. “It’s a very good thing to have about you, if you’re expecting an adventure.”

They soon got their spades and went back again to the queer little stone house. What a tumble-down place it was! People could not have been into it for years and years.

They began to dig away the earth and moss from the floor of the house. They cleared it all from the stone flag beneath, and then saw that it was indeed meant to be lifted, for it distinctly moved a little when both children tugged at it!

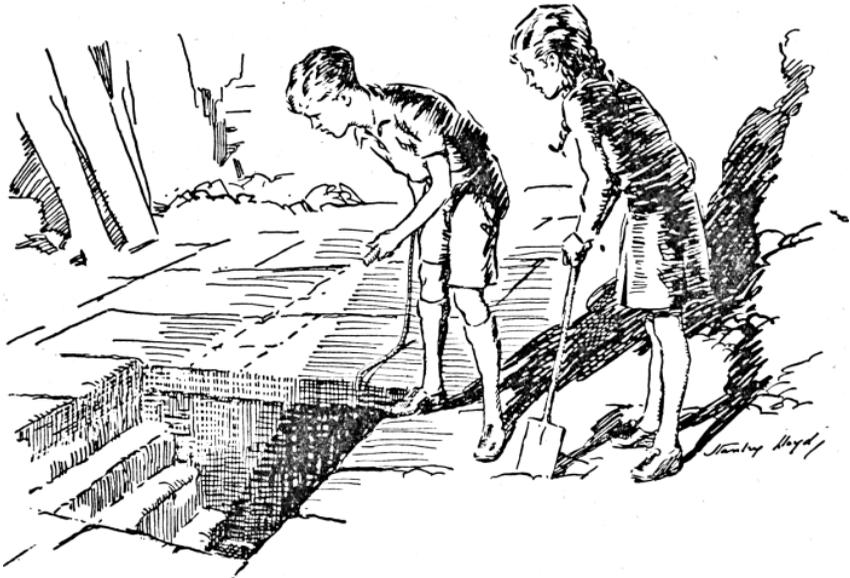
“Gosh! Isn’t this thrilling?” said Dick, pushing his hair back from his dripping forehead, and smearing his face with black dirt. “Wait—I’ve got a rope. We’ll double it and slip it through the iron handle. Then we can both get a good grip on the rope and pull together. We’ll never be able to pull the stone up with the handle. It’s much too difficult.”

Dick unwound a rope from round his waist. He always wore one there, in case of an adventure. Harry often laughed at him, but Dick didn’t mind. One day, he knew, the rope would come in useful—and now it had!

He doubled the rope and slipped it under and through the iron handle. Then he and Cathy pulled with all their might, panting and groaning with their efforts.

Nothing happened. They sat down to get their breath. “Let’s run our spades all round the edges of the flag-stone. It’s stuck fast with soil, I expect,” said Dick. “If we loosen that away, the stone might come up more easily.”

So they dug their spades all round the edges of the stone, and cleared out the dirt. Then they took hold of the rope and tried again. And, quite suddenly, the stone moved! It first moved upwards, and then slid sideways and downwards in a peculiar way. It left a hole, dark and mysterious.



"Look—stone steps—awfully steep and narrow, though."

"Gracious!" said Cathy, speaking in a whisper, though she didn't quite know why. "Look at that!"

Dick took out his torch. He flashed it down the hole. "Steps!" he said. "Look—stone steps—awfully steep and narrow, though. I say, Cathy—isn't this exciting? Shall we go down?"

"No," said Cathy, half afraid.

"Well—I'm going, anyway," said Dick, and he put his foot down to the first step.

"I won't let you go alone," said Cathy. "If you're going, I'm coming with you. Oh dear—I do wish Harry was here."

"Well, I don't," said Dick. "He wouldn't stay and help so he doesn't deserve to share in this adventure!"

He went down to the next step. Then to the next. There appeared to be a missing or broken one after that and Dick missed his footing and fell. He gave a yell and Cathy jumped in fright.

But Dick hadn't far to fall—only two or three more steps. He landed on some soft earth, afraid that he might break his torch. But luckily he didn't.

"It's all right," he shouted up. "There's a step missing, so look out. I'll shine my torch for you."

Cathy got down without falling. Dick flashed his torch round. A narrow dark passage ran downwards at the end of the steps.

"It looks horrible," said Cathy, with a shiver. "Wherever does it go to?"

"Goodness knows," said Dick. "Come on. Let's find out."

"We shan't meet anything awful, shall we?" asked Cathy, nervously, not quite knowing what she expected to meet.

"Well, we might see a worm or two," said Dick, cheerfully. "Do come on. Can't you *enjoy* an adventure, Cathy? Just like a girl—scared of everything."

"Well, I'm jolly well not scared, then," said Cathy, in a brave tone. "Only—I'd like you to go first, Dick."

Dick had every intention of going first. Down the narrow, sloping passage he went, with Cathy close behind him. It smelt musty and queer. Dick suddenly wondered if the air was good. He had read somewhere that if the air underground was not good, explorers fell down in a kind of stupor, and died. Still, he felt quite all right, so maybe the air was good.

The passage stopped sloping downwards and went along on the level. It no longer wound about but ran practically straight. Dick tried to puzzle out what direction it could be running in—towards the sea, perhaps? But he could not make up his mind.

He kept the torch pointed towards the ground so as to see where to tread. He did not realise that the roof of the passage suddenly sloped low, and he got a terrific bang on the head as he walked into it. He stopped suddenly

with a cry, and Cathy bumped into him.

“Oh! What’s the matter?”

“Look out for the roof—it gets low here,” said Dick, and bent his head down to walk under the low part. Soon he came to a full-stop. His torch showed him more stone steps—this time going upwards.

Up them went Dick, followed by Cathy, who was now wishing to goodness they could see daylight again. They came out into a great wide dark place, and could not imagine where they were.

“It’s a cellar!” said Cathy, suddenly. “Look, there are old cobwebby bottles over there. Oooh—look at that enormous spider. Dick, don’t let it come over here.”

“It won’t,” said Dick. “It’s much more scared of you than you are of it! Yes, you’re right. We’re in a cellar—and if I’m not mistaken, it’s the cellar of the old empty house!”

“Do you really think so?” said Cathy, astonished. “How can we get out then?”

“Up the cellar steps to the kitchen, I should think,” said Dick, and began to flash his torch here and there to try and find out where any more steps were. He soon found them, in a distant corner. This time they were made of wood, not stone. The two children went up them, to a door at the top. It was shut.

Dick turned the handle. It opened into a great kitchen, with a huge range at one end for cooking.

“Yes, it *is* the old house,” said Dick. “I say—what fun! We can come here and play. We’ll explore it from top to bottom.”

“Will it matter if we do?” said Cathy. “Won’t anybody mind?”

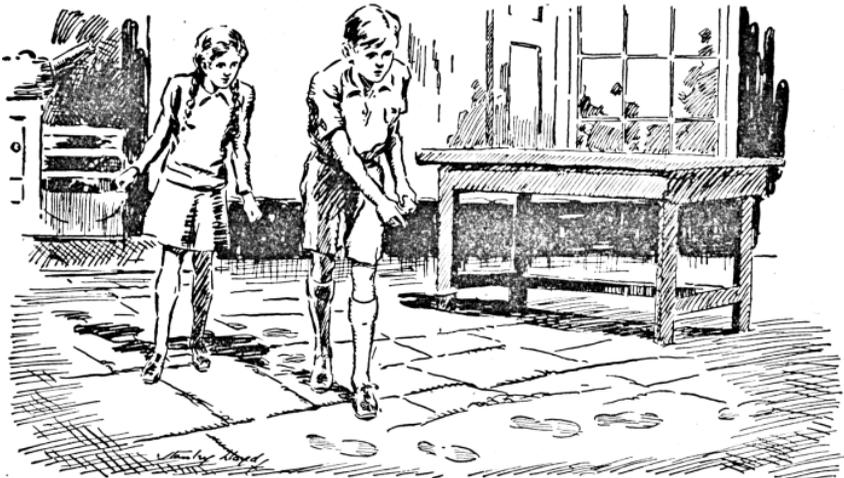
“Why should they?” said Dick. “We shan’t do any harm or damage. I say, it’s good to see a bit of daylight, isn’t it, even if it has to come through such dirty windows!”

It was good to see daylight. A few rays of sunshine straggled through the window nearby, and lay on the floor. It was these that showed Dick something which astonished him. He gave an exclamation.

“Look there! Foot-prints in the dust on the floor! They’re not ours, they’re too big. I wonder who comes here.”

Cathy stared at them fearfully. They looked freshly made. She didn’t like them. Suppose there was somebody in the house now?

“Let’s go back,” she whispered. “Somebody might catch us. I don’t like it.”



“Look there! Foot-prints in the dust on the floor!”

Dick was beginning to feel he didn’t much like it either. It was queer to be in an old, old empty house—and see fresh foot-prints in the dust on the floor. The house was so quiet too—as if it was listening for something. Dick clutched Cathy and made her jump.





“Come on. We’ll go back. We’ve seen enough. We’ll come back with Harry sometime.”

They hurried to the cellar door, and down the wooden steps. They found their way to the hole where the other stone steps began and went down those into the dark passage. And then somebody jumped out at them from the passage with a yell that almost frightened the life out of them.

The somebody clutched hold of them tightly and yelled again. Then Dick struck out crossly and yelled back. “It’s you, Harry, you beast! Scaring us like that. You really are horrible.”

Harry laughed. He was very, very glad to find the others. He and Kim had come back to the little stone house and discovered the hole where the stone had been, and the steps leading down. Cross to think that Dick and Cathy had actually discovered something thrilling, Harry had gone down after them.

But he had no torch and it was not at all pleasant groping about in the darkness. He longed to hear the cheerful voices of the others—and at last he did hear them! He had waited to jump out at Dick, and had given

both Dick and Cathy a terrible fright.

“Sorry,” said Harry. “Did I really scare you so? Get down, Kim. Dick, where does this lead to? You found an adventure after all!”

“Rather!” said Dick. “One up on you, old boy! Gosh, I’m glad to have you, Harry, even though you did scare me stiff. Do you know, this passage leads to the cellar of the old empty house? And we’ve been up into the kitchen—and there are fresh foot-prints there in the dust of the floor!”

“Whew!” said Harry. “That’s queer. Who comes here then? Perhaps it’s just some tramp at night.”

“But we *know* the place is locked and barred,” said Dick, “because we’ve often tried to get into it ourselves from the outside, just to see what it was like. And we never could. It can’t be just a tramp!”

“Let’s go back again and I’ll have a look,” said Harry. So back they went and, once they were in the kitchen, Harry saw the big foot-prints too.

“Yes—they’re freshly-made all right,” he said. “My word—listen—there’s somebody opening the front door! Quick, down to the cellar!”

Their hearts beating fast, the children made for the cellar-door. They stood there and listened for a moment. They heard the front-door open, and then to their great amazement they heard a voice they knew well! It was old Mrs. Harriman, who went out doing housework, and who came to them every Saturday, to help Miss Truman. Whatever was *she* doing here?

Kim whined, for he too recognized Mrs. Harriman’s voice, but Harry’s hand tightened on his collar. No, he must not give them away. Mrs. Harriman was talking to somebody.

“Well, here we are, Liza, and I must say it’s a dreadful place, enough to give you the creeps. Fancy somebody coming along to live in it after all this time. Well, you and me’s got our work cut out to clean the place up a bit, and scrub them filthy floors.”

Kim whined again, and the children retreated down the cellar.

“Funny,” came Mrs. Harriman’s booming voice, as she entered the great kitchen. “I thought I heard a dog whining then. Shows you what your imagination can do!”

Harry softly shut the cellar door and went down the steps after the others. They made their way to the hole and went down the steps there into the passage. Soon they had arrived inside the little tumble-down stone house, glad to see the sunshine coming through the trees.

“Well—it wasn’t so mysterious after all—seeing those foot-prints!” said Harry. “They must have been made by somebody who came to look at the house. Fancy people coming to live here after all those years! I wonder who they are. Perhaps Mrs. Harriman will know.”

“Don’t tell her about the underground way into the house,” said Cathy. “Let’s make it our secret. I like secrets like that.”

“Course we won’t tell her,” said Dick. “Let’s shut down the stone door, and pull bracken over it to hide it. It might be fun to use it again before the people come in.”

They went home with Kim, who looked very disappointed. He had hoped to find plenty of rabbits down that wonderful dark rabbit-hole—and there hadn’t even been a smell of one!

Miss Truman did not seem to mind their coming home so dirty. She did not even ask where they had been. So long as they were in good health and hadn’t hurt themselves she didn’t really bother much about their doings.

The next day was Saturday, so the children asked Mrs. Harriman, when she came to do some scrubbing, if anyone was coming to the old house.

“Yes, there is,” said Mrs. Harriman, settling herself down on the floor with a large pail of water and an outside scrubbing-brush. “My, my, look at this floor! Doesn’t *anyone* wipe their feet in this house?”

“Only Kim,” said Cathy, with a giggle. “Who’s coming to the old, empty house, Mrs. Harriman?”

“Well, that I don’t rightly know,” said Mrs. Harriman, beginning to scrub vigorously. “Mind your feet, miss: The house agent, he called on me, gave me the key, and said I was to go up and clean, with Liza. All he said was that a gentleman was coming to live there, a real recluse, he called him, though what that is I *don’t* know.”

“Nor do I,” said Cathy. But the boys knew.

“It’s somebody who wants to live away from everyone and not be bothered by visitors or anything,” said Dick. “Well, he won’t be bothered much there! When’s he coming?”

“Next week, so I hear,” said Mrs. Harriman. “Mind your feet again, miss. And if anybody treads on where I’ve just scrubbed they won’t get any of my chocolate buns for tea, and I tell you that straight.”

Everyone immediately went away from the gleaming wet part that Mrs. Harriman had scrubbed. There didn’t seem to be much more information they could get out of the charwoman, so they retired to the garden, where they picked and ate a large amount of purple plums.

"We could watch each day and see who comes," said Dick. "We can see the furniture vans. They will have to pass our cottage."

"So they will," said Cathy. So each day the children watched, and on the next Wednesday they were rewarded by seeing two great vans come lumbering by. They followed the vans up to the old house.

Mrs. Harriman was there with a paper in her hand, directing proceedings. "All furniture marked D is to go into the dining-room," she told the foreman. "I'll show you which it is. And all marked K is to . . ."

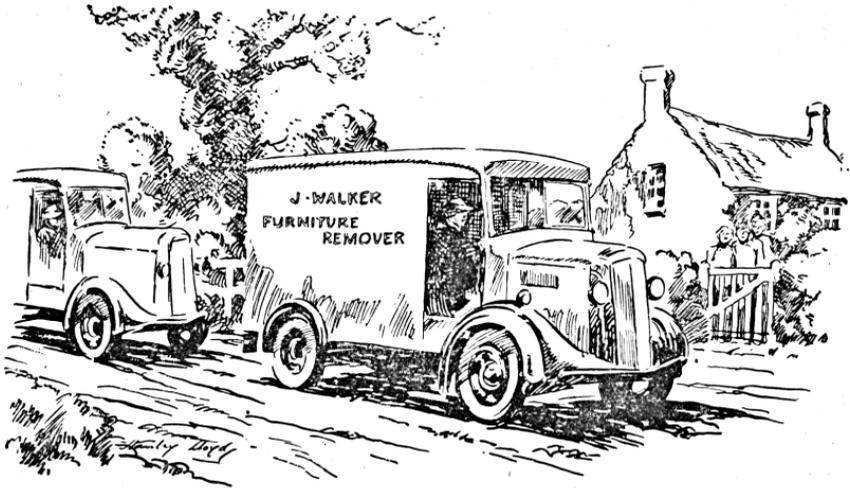
"It's just the furniture—not the recluse man," said Cathy, disappointed. "Blow! We shan't see him now."

The children were not interested in the furniture, so they went away. They found their bathing things and went to bathe. They then took out their leaky old boat, got caught in a current, and had to row so very hard back to shore that they were absolutely tired out.

They crawled back to their cottage, groaning and stiff. "Done too much, I suppose?" said Miss Truman. "Well, I'll get you some supper and then off to bed you must go. You'll be asleep in two shakes of a duck's tail, I should think."

The boys were, but Cathy was too tired even to go to sleep! She tossed and turned. She heard the church clock down in the distant village strike ten, eleven and even twelve. She dozed a little and then heard it strike one.

And just as it had struck, she heard another noise. It was a car coming slowly and quietly along the lane by their cottage! Cathy was most surprised. No cars ever came along there, for the lane was a blind one, going only to their cottage and then a little distance on to the old empty house. Was the car going to stop at the cottage?



They were rewarded by seeing two great vans come lumbering by.

No, it was not. It went straight on past it, up the lane. Cathy listened. How very queer! Was it going to the old house? But how late at night to arrive!

She lay down again. The car did not come back. She listened for it for some time and then quite suddenly fell asleep.

In the morning she was not quite sure if she had dreamt it. So before she told the boys she went into the sandy lane and had a look round. Yes—there were the marks of the tyres. So she hadn't dreamt it.

"The recluse man has arrived at the old house," Cathy announced at breakfast.

"How do you know?" said Harry, disbelievingly.

"Because I heard his car going by last night at about one o'clock," said Cathy.

"That's morning, not night," said Dick.

"Well, it was one o'clock in the morning, in the middle of the night," said Cathy. "And there are tyre marks in our lane this morning."

The children went for a walk up to the old house after breakfast to see if they could see any sign of the "recluse man" as Cathy would keep calling him. But the great iron gates were not only closed, but padlocked, and, as there were high walls all round the grounds, the children knew there was no way of getting in at all. Except, of course, by the underground passage!

“But we can’t possibly use that again,” said Harry. “Not now the house is occupied. It didn’t matter when it was empty. My word, the recluse, whoever he is, means to keep everyone away, doesn’t he!”

“What about food and milk and stuff?” wondered Cathy.

“Oh, he’s probably got good stores,” said Harry. “Come on—let’s go and lie on the sand. I’m so stiff with rowing yesterday that I don’t even want to bathe to-day!”

So, with Kim bounding along beside them, the children went down to the beach and forgot all about the old house and its queerness. They spent a happy, lazy day together, and went off to bed, yawning, at nine o’clock.

Cathy had tossed and turned for hours the night before, so to-night she fell asleep at once. Dick did too, but Harry lay wide awake, listening to the owls hooting in the woods round the old lonely house. He was glad he was in his cosy cottage, not imprisoned in that great house, surrounded by high walls and tall trees.

He lay so that he could look out of the window. It was very dark outside for the sky was clouded over, and there was no moon at all. He faced in the direction of the old house, which was a good way away, hidden by trees.



He lay so that he could look out of the window.

Harry lay there, gazing out for a little while—then he became conscious of some far-off light somewhere. Was it a light? He tried to focus his eyes in the direction from which he thought it came, and waited. Yes, it was some kind of light—faint and far off—and coming in flashes. How queer. Where did it come from?



And then he saw the light quite distinctly.

He thought for a minute. It *could* come from the top windows of the old house. He could see those indistinctly through the tops of the trees in the daytime, if he looked out of his window. But why should a light come and go from there in the middle of the night?

He decided to get up and investigate. He pulled on shorts and jersey and went out, Kim running beside him, surprised and pleased to have a night-walk.

Harry made his way towards the old house. He could not see it in the dark, and almost bumped into the trunks of trees as he made his way between them.

And then he saw the light quite distinctly. It came from the topmost window of the old house, a pin-prick of light, flashing off and on, off and on, as if the owner was trying to signal to somebody. But to whom would anyone want to signal at night, in that lonely place? Nobody would ever see that pin-point of light, except by accident.

Then the light became fainter, and finally the flashes stopped altogether. Harry made a note of exactly where the window would be, and made up his mind to look for it the next day. Then back he went to bed, and fell asleep.

He told the others the next morning and they felt most excited. "It's a mystery," said Dick. "There really is some mystery. We must solve it!"

They went to have a look at the window. It was the topmost one on the eastern side of the house—and it was barred.

"Well, that's nothing. It's always been barred, as long as we can remember," said Dick. "It was once a nursery, Mrs. Harriman said."

"Do you think there is anyone there now?" said Cathy. "I mean—somebody we could see, if we climbed a tree, say?"

"Cathy, that's an *awfully* good idea!" said Harry at once. "If I climb this tall tree here, its top will be about level with that window. I'll do it."

The tree was a chestnut, and grew just outside the wall that ran round the grounds of the old house. Harry climbed it easily. He went steadily to the top and then slid out on a broad branch to get as near as he could to the barred window. But he was still so far away that he could not possibly see inside.

And then, just as he was going to get down, somebody came to the window and looked out. Harry expected to see an old man—but instead he saw a young boy with a shock of dark hair, enormous dark eyes and a pale face. He was most surprised, and stared across at the window in astonishment.

Harry gave one of his piercing whistles to get the boy's attention. The boy heard it and looked out. He suddenly saw Harry on the branch of the chestnut tree and was so amazed that he could only stand and stare. Harry yelled to him.

"Who are you?"

The boy put his finger to his lips and looked thoroughly scared. Harry did not shout again. Then the boy made a sign to Harry to wait, and disappeared from the window. He was away for a minute or two, then came back.

He put his finger to his lips again, to tell Harry not to make a noise. Then he began to hold up sheets of white note-paper, on each of which he had printed in bold black letters, one letter of the alphabet. He held them up one after another for Harry to see.

Harry jotted them down in his note-book as the boy held them up. "I-A-M-A-P-R-I-S-O-N-E-R." It was not until he had got them all jotted down that Harry suddenly saw what words they spelt. "I am a prisoner!"

"Golly!" thought Harry. "So that's what the light meant last night. He was signalling with his torch, I suppose, hoping someone would see the light, till the battery failed. Gosh, what am I to do about this? How can he be a prisoner?"

Harry waved reassuringly to the boy, and was just about to begin climbing down the tree when he saw that the prisoner had disappeared very suddenly indeed from the window. Then a furious face appeared and looked out. It was the face of a bearded man with big glasses, rimmed with black.

Harry slid out of sight at once. He climbed down as quickly as he could and told the others what he had seen. They listened breathlessly.

"Then it *is* an adventure," said Dick. "I had a feeling we were in for one. We'll have to rescue this boy. Perhaps he has been kidnapped."

"Yes. I never thought of that," said Harry. "We'd better look in the paper and see if there's anything about kidnapping. We never look at the paper in the usual way, so we wouldn't know."



On the way they met Mrs. Harriman.

They went back to the cottage, and on the way they met Mrs. Harriman, going to clean at the old house.

"Mrs. Harriman—have you seen the man at the house?" asked Harry. "Is he all alone?"

"Yes, not a soul there besides himself," said the charwoman. "Says he's writing a book and has to be quiet and by himself."

"Are you sure there's nobody else?" asked Dick. "Have you been all over the house?"

"Course I have," said Mrs. Harriman. "Not on the top floor, though, because there's nothing there, so Mr. Cordery says."

"Oh—that's what he says, is it?" said Harry. "Well, Mrs. Harriman—just suppose I told you there was a prisoner up there!"

Mrs. Harriman laughed loudly. "Now don't you go playing any more of your jokes on me. Master Harry. I've had enough of them. If you think you're going to make me climb up those steep stairs to the top, just to look for an imaginary prisoner, well, you can think again. You and your make-ups!"

And she went on her way, chuckling. It was no good trying to get any advice from Mrs. Harriman, or any help either! They went in at their cottage gate, and looked for the paper.



The children gazed at them as if they couldn't believe their eyes.

And there head-lines, big and black, stared them in the face. "Jackie Macario, son of famous film star, kidnaped." The children gazed at them as if they couldn't believe their eyes.

"Do you think," said Cathy at last, in a whisper, "do you think that's the boy—the one Harry saw?"

"Yes," said Dick. "Miss Truman, did you see this in the paper this morning—about the kidnaping? Well, we know where the boy is."

“Now, don’t tell silly stories,” said Miss Truman, placidly. “If you want to pretend things and play games like that, you can—but really you can’t expect me to believe them!”

And the more the children told her about what they knew, the more she pooh-poohed it all. She could not realise that they were no longer small children, and she wasn’t going to be bothered to go into their ridiculous tales.

“It’s no good,” said Harry, at last. “We’d better do something ourselves. We’ll rescue him to-night!”

“How?” asked Dick at once.

“We’ll go through the underground passage, into the cellar, up into the kitchen, and up to the top floor,” said Harry. “The door will be locked and bolted—but the key and bolt will be on the outside, and we can easily undo them!”

“Oh—I’d be afraid!” said Cathy.

“Well, don’t come then,” said Dick. “I’ll go along with Harry—and we’ll take Kim too.”

“Oh no, I *must* come if you go,” said Cathy bravely. So they laid their plans, and waited anxiously for the night to come.

At eleven o’clock they set out, with their torches. Kim went with them. He had been warned not to bark, and he quite understood. The three children came to the little tumble-down summer-house and removed the flagstone that hid the entrance underground. Down they went, one by one. Cathy was trembling. It was so dark and queer. She was glad to feel Kim’s tongue on her bare legs now and then.

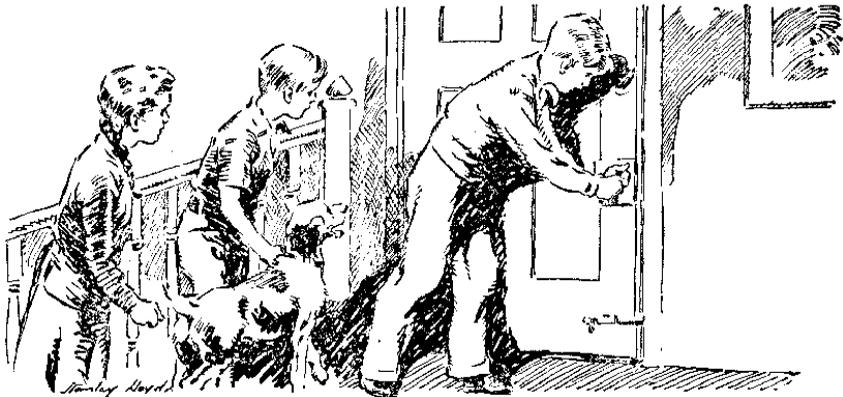
Along the passage—up to the cellar—up the wooden steps to the vast dark kitchen, where a winking red eye showed where the great range was almost out. Then out of the kitchen and into the hall.

The wide stairs lay before them, well carpeted. Where was Mr. Cordery? In bed, probably. There was no light to be seen anywhere.

The three went up the stairs with Kim beside them. It seemed as if he, too, was walking on tiptoe! Up one flight of stairs—up another—and then a third. Now they were at the very top of the house.

Harry swung his torch around the top landing. All the doors were open but one. In that one must be the prisoner!

They tiptoed towards it. It was bolted. There was a large key in the lock, and the children felt sure the door was locked too.



Cautiously, Harry turned the key.

Cautiously Harry turned the key. It gave a slight click. Then he slid back the bolt. It creaked a little, and the children held their breath as they waited to see if anyone had heard. No, there was no sound.

Harry turned the handle and pushed the door open. The room was in darkness. Then a scared voice came from somewhere. “Oh, what do you want? Why do you keep me here like this? Don’t hurt me, don’t hurt me!”

It was a boy’s voice. Harry switched on his torch and spoke in a whisper.

“Are you Jackie Macario?”

“Yes, yes. Who are you? Oh, don’t scare me so!”

“We are your friends,” said Harry. “We’ve come to rescue you. I’m the boy you saw in the tree—the one you showed those letters to.”

"Oh, yes—I got beaten for that," said the boy. "Have you really come to rescue me? Let's go then, before that horrible man discovers you."

Without waiting to put on even a dressing gown the boy went to the door with the others. He jumped violently when Kim licked him for he had not known there was a dog there.

"It's only Kim," whispered Dick. "Come on. Down the stairs."

They went down the stairs as quietly as possible. But suddenly, in the darkness, Cathy bumped into something and it fell over with a crash. Scared almost out of their skin, the four children ran swiftly across the landing to the next flight of stairs.

And then suddenly a door was flung open, a light flashed on, and there was Mr. Cordery, black-bearded and fierce, glaring at them in the greatest astonishment.

"What's this? Who are you? Come here, you, you, you . . ."

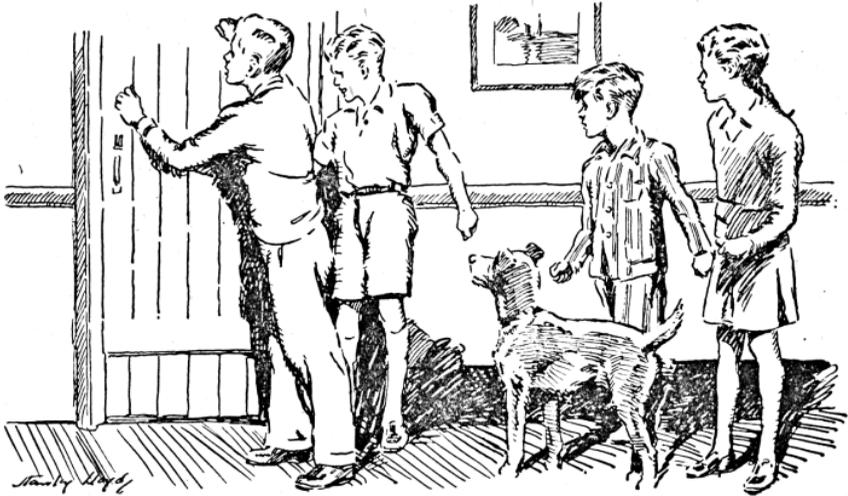
He was in such a rage that he could not get his words out. He caught hold of Dick and shook him like a rat.

The others paused, afraid for Dick. Kim gave a growl and flung himself on Mr. Cordery. The man gave a shout and tried to fend the dog away. "Come on, Dick!" shouted Harry, running down the next flight of stairs. "Leave Kim to settle him." They had enough time to dart into the kitchen. Then Kim came after them, his head bleeding from a savage blow. Then came Mr. Cordery raging with temper, an iron bar in his hand. The children ran to the cellar-door and down the wooden steps. Kim followed them.

The door slammed above them. They heard Mr. Cordery's loud laugh. "Ha! You want to be prisoners, too, do you? Well, you shall all stay down in the cellar, in the dark and cold, with the spiders and the bats!"

Then the key turned in the lock of the cellar-door. Harry began to laugh weakly. "He thinks we're his prisoners. He doesn't know it's our way of escape. Come on, quick, before he smells a rat!"

They dragged the surprised and frightened boy with them. Down the steps, into the underground cellar, along the passage and up into the old summer-house. Then through the woods and home. Cathy was terribly worried about poor Kim. Was he very badly hurt?



They banged on Miss Truman's door

They went into the house and banged on Miss Truman's door. "Miss Truman! Come quickly!"

Miss Truman came, looking most astonished. When she saw the three bedraggled children, and a fourth one, quite strange to her, and poor Kim bleeding from his wound, she was filled with amazement.

The children poured out everything to her. "Oh dear, oh dear, why didn't you tell me before?" she said, as she bathed Kim's head.

"But we *did*, and you thought we were making it all up," said Cathy, quite crossly. "Miss Truman, oughtn't we to tell the police? Jackie Macario's mother and father ought to know where he is, and the police ought to know about Mr. Cordery."

"Of course, of course," said Miss Truman, putting her arm round the shivering Jackie. "You go and get a dressing-gown for him, Harry. Kim will be all right now. I'll go and 'phone. Dear me, what a night, what a night!"

I can scarcely believe it!”

Neither could the policeman when Miss Truman telephoned to him. But he did believe her tale at last, and said he would telephone to his superior officer in the next town and get instructions.

And before very long a police car came roaring up with three big policemen in it, all very anxious to see for themselves if the little prisoner the children had rescued really and truly *was* Jackie Macario.

Nobody had much sleep that night, except little Jackie, who was tired out with excitement.

The police left the cottage and roared on to the old house. Mr. Cordery was astounded to hear loud knockings on the front door, and only when he heard that it was the police who were demanding entrance did he open the door.



And then it was Mr. Cordery who was taken prisoner.

And then it was Mr. Cordery who was taken prisoner! “I tell you I know nothing about Jackie Macario,” he kept saying. “Nothing at all.”

But when he was faced with the boy the next day, he could no longer go on with his tale. “All right,” he said, sullenly. “I’ll tell you everything, see? I didn’t kidnap him—the others did that. I brought him here and put him in that barred room to wait till the ransom was paid. That’s all I did. And then some interfering kids got him away—though how they got into the house—and out of the cellar I locked them into, beats me!”

“Yes. A clever lot of kids,” said the Inspector, smiling round at the three children. “Well, Jackie, your parents will soon be here, and you’ll be safe again.”

“I’d like to stay with these children if Mother will let me,” said Jackie. But alas, she wouldn’t. She took her precious son away with her, thankful to have him safely back—but she left behind three things that thrilled the children tremendously.

One was a great rubber ball for playing about with on the beach or in the sea. That was for Harry.

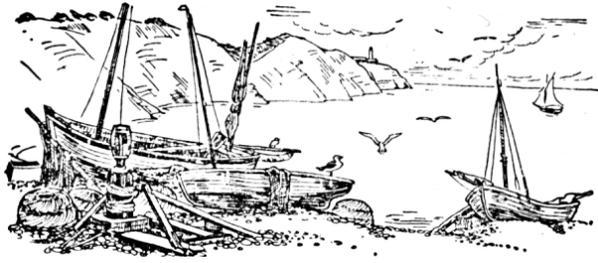
Another was a shrimping net almost as big as the one the fishermen used when they went shrimping. That was for Dick.

The third was a funny rubber horse that could be ridden in the waves. That was for Cathy.

“Gracious!” said Cathy, in delight. “What wizard presents—and all for taking part in a really thrilling adventure. Miss Truman, you can have a ride on my horse if you like, next time you bathe.”

“No, *thank* you,” said Miss Truman, eyeing the big rubber creature in horror. “I know what would happen to me! I’d be pushed off it at once—that would be your idea of a joke!”

The children laughed and raced off to the beach with their presents, “Let’s hope for another adventure soon!” said Dick. “They’re FUN!”



NATURE QUIZ ANSWERS

BIRDS, No. 1

Page 22 (T) Hedge-sparrow
(B) Thrush

Page 23 (T) Starling
(B) Blue-tit

Page 24 (TL) Chaffinch
(TR) Robin
(C) Wren
(B) Wagtail

Page 25 (TL) House-sparrow
(TR) Blackbird
(C) Great-tit
(B) Skylark

BIRDS, No. 2

Page 51 House-martin

Page 52 (T) Swift
(B) Swallow

Page 53 (T) Nightingale
(B) Willow-warbler

Page 54 (T) Flycatcher
(B) Kingfisher

Page 55 (T) Tawny Owl
(B) Rook

Page 56 (T) Yellowhammer
(B) Peewit

Page 57 Cuckoo

BUTTERFLIES

Page 83 (T) Orange-tip
(B) Peacock

Page 84 (T) Meadow Brown
(BL) Brimstone Yellow
(BR) Tortoiseshell

Page 85 (TL) Ringlet
(TR) Painted Lady (*Were you clever enough to notice
that this butterfly is drawn smaller than
life-size?*)

Page 85 (B) Common Blue

Page 86 (T) Cabbage White
(B) Red Admiral

Page 87 (T) Silver-washed Fritillary
(B) Small Copper

MOTHS

Page 146 (T) Silver Y
(B) Garden Tiger

Page 147 (T) Old Lady
(B) Six-spot Burnet

Page 148 (T) Yellow Underwing
(B) Red Underwing

Page 149 (T) Gold-tail
(B) Swallow-tail

Page 150 Emerald Moth

Page 151 (T) Clothes Moth
(BL) Magpie
(BR) Poplar Hawk

FLOWERS

Page 180 (T) Celandine
(BL) Coltsfoot
(BR) Anemone

Page 181 (T) Shepherd's Purse
(BL) Germander Speedwell
(BR) Dog's Mercury

Page 182 (T) Common Arum
(B) Stitchwort

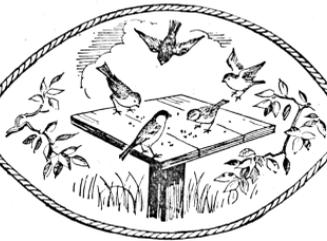
Page 183 (T) Garlic Mustard
(B) Hedge Parsley

Page 184 (T) Poppy
(B) Bird's-foot Trefoil

Page 185 (T) Tansy
(B) St. John's Wort

Page 186 (L) Chicory
(R) Ivy

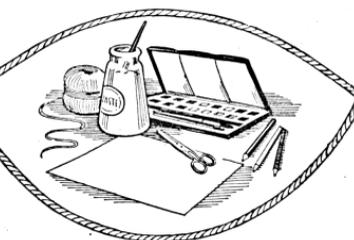
T = Top. B = Bottom. R = Right. L = Left. C = Centre.

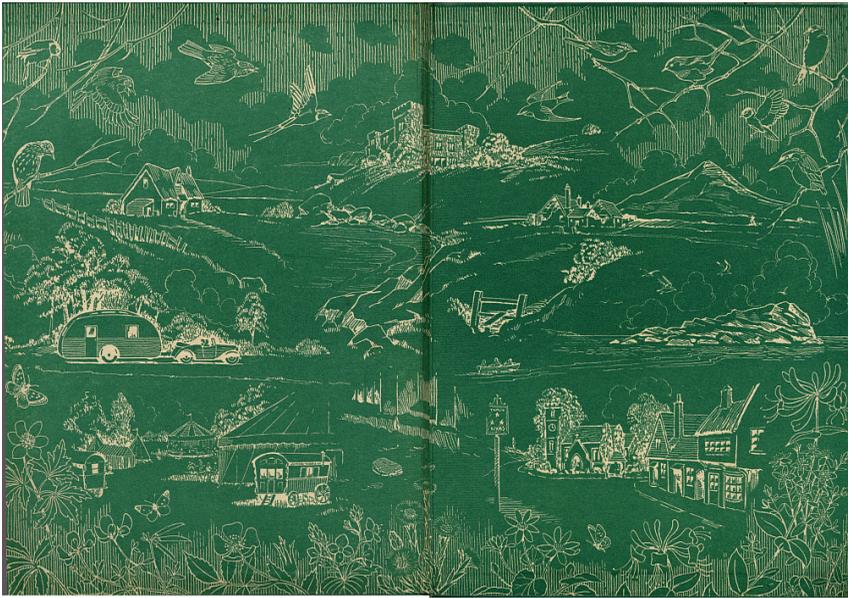


It's goodbye now—the book is done,
 You've read the stories one by one,
 You've guessed the quizzes (were you right?)
 And slept on Thunder Rock all night!
 Then with the Wild West Kids you went
 To gallop in the circus tent,
 And in the Smugglers' Cave you found
 Treasure lying all around.
 You solved with young Detective John
 The problems he was working on,
 And sometimes with Miss Hannah's aid
 All kinds of jolly things you made.
 You visited, at dead of night,
 The Lonely House, and got a fright!
 And did you see the caravan
 When down the hill it swiftly ran?
 There isn't room to write of all
 The fine adventures, big and small,
 For see, the book is really done
 With all its stories and its fun,
 So now goodbye, and let me say
 I hope we'll meet again some day!



Enid Blyton





End Paper

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

Some photographs have been enhanced to be more legible.

[The end of *Enid Blyton's Treasury* by Enid Blyton]