



*The* LITTLE  
RUNAWAYS *at*  
ORCHARD HOUSE

ALICE TURNER CURTIS



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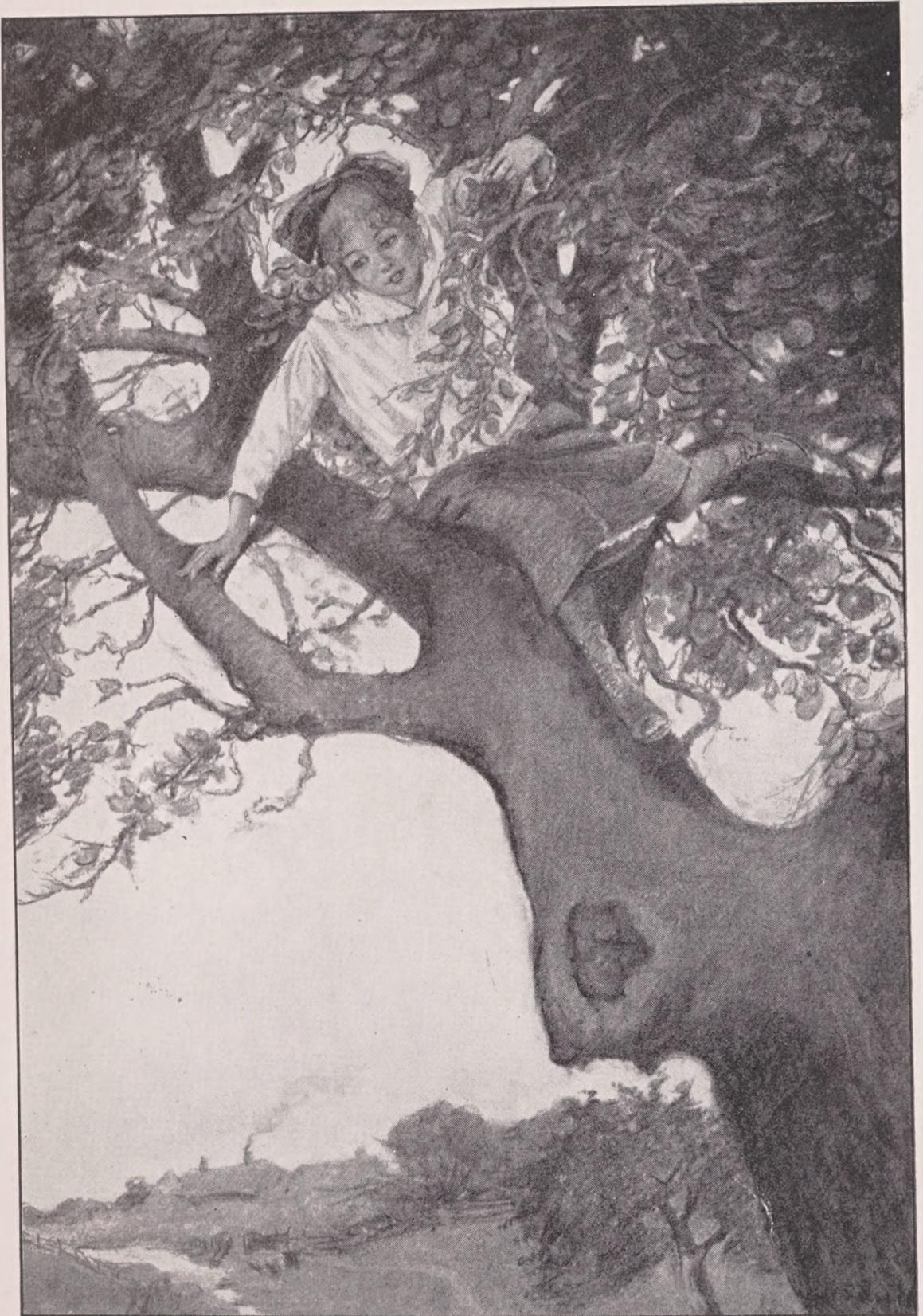
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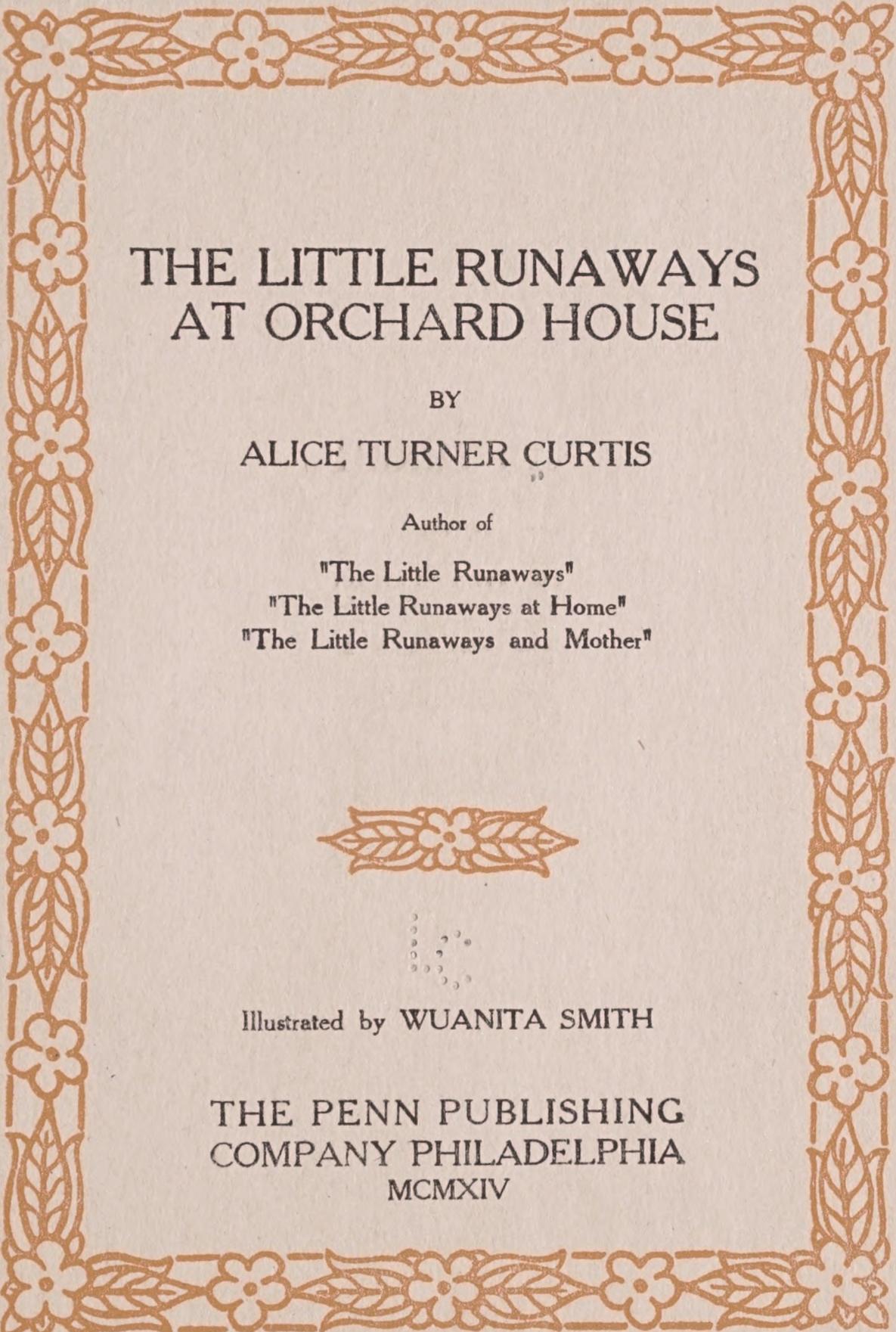








SHE COULD LOOK DOWN AT THE TABLE

A decorative border in a light brown or tan color, featuring a repeating pattern of stylized flowers and leaves. The border is rectangular and frames the central text.

# THE LITTLE RUNAWAYS AT ORCHARD HOUSE

BY

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

Author of

"The Little Runaways"

"The Little Runaways at Home"

"The Little Runaways and Mother"



Illustrated by WUANITA SMITH

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## Introduction

PHINEAS TROT BURTON, "whose mother was a Higgins," and little Cathie, who could not remember her own mother, have grown up in Mrs. Burton's pleasant home in a Maine village. They were little runaways from an orphan asylum, and found a real mother and a "truly home."

In "The Little Runaways at Home," and "The Little Runaways and Mother," is told the story of their adventures, how Phineas kills a bear, makes a friend of the village clergyman, and Cathie tries housekeeping and meets "Miss Patricia" from London.

In "The Little Runaways at Orchard House" Phineas begins to help other asylum boys, and gives them some of the good times he has enjoyed on a farm. Cathie's adventure in the apple tree, and the adventures and escapes of the six boys who spend a summer vacation at Orchard House will be sure to interest boys and girls who have made the acquaintance of the "Little Runaways" in the earlier volumes of this series.



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The Little Runaways at Orchard House.



# The Little Runaways at Orchard House

## CHAPTER I

### THE GUESTS ARRIVE

“THE hay-rack will be the very thing for the boys to ride from the station in,” declared Phineas. “I’ll put a good lot of hay in it, and I’ll bet those boys will like it better than any automobile that was ever made.”

“Of course they will,” agreed Cathie admiringly.

Phineas Trot Burton and Catherine Burton stood under the big elm tree in front of “Orchard House,” as they now called the old Eastman farm, which Phineas had hired, and with the help of his schoolmates and neighbors had made into a comfortable summer home for six boys from a Boston Orphan Asylum. The boys were to arrive on the train that was due at Cumberland Junction, five miles distant, at noon. It was now early in the morning, and Phineas and Cathie had run across the field from their own home to look at

the house and be sure that everything was in readiness.

“It’s shining clean, anyway,” declared the little girl, looking toward the gray shingled farmhouse, whose front door and windows were wide open.

“And Miss Pitts has made six blueberry pies,” added Phineas.

“And they are to have roast chicken and green peas, and plenty of milk for dinner, and eat out-of-doors,” said Cathie.

“I guess Mother Burton didn’t realize that she was adopting a whole orphan asylum when you walked up to her kitchen door four years ago,” Phineas said laughingly.

Four years ago Mrs. Burton had adopted Cathie and Phineas, whose only home had been the orphan asylum from which they were now expecting the six boys to stay for the month of August. Phineas had hired the Eastman place, a deserted old farm, intending to use part of it for pasturage, to raise chickens, improve the orchard, and sell hay, and so make it profitable. This first year he wanted to give other boys a taste of what a real vacation could be. Phinny was now sixteen years old; he meant to go to college, and after that to earn his living on the Eastman farm and help other

boys. Cathie was nearly thirteen, and she, too, was planning for college.

“It’s fine in Miss Pitts to keep house for the boys,” continued Phineas. “What do you suppose they’ll be like, Cathie?”

“Well, as you told the superintendent to pick out the six homeliest boys, and boys that nobody wanted to adopt, I guess they won’t be either handsome or good-natured,” answered Cathie laughingly.

“Well, I shall know just how they feel then,” answered the boy.

“Why, Phinny Trot, you were always good-natured,” declared Cathie. “There comes Miss Pitts now,” and Cathie ran down the road to meet a tall, thin woman who, carrying a sunshade in one hand and a basket in the other, was coming briskly along toward the farmhouse.

Miss Pitts waved her sunshade toward the little girl.

“Cookies!” she exclaimed holding out the basket toward Cathie. “Sugar cookies! Thought maybe they’d like ’em.”

“You always think of such lovely things,” declared Cathie.

“Have one?” she suggested, holding out the basket.

Cathie took the basket, but declared that she did not want a cooky.

“Phinny’s going to hitch Splendid into the hay-rack, and bring the boys home in that,” she said.

“That’s a good idea. Did you know that one of the boys is Nonny Sykes, who was in the asylum when you were there?” responded Miss Pitts.

“I don’t remember him,” said Cathie.

“Well, Phinny does. This Nonny Sykes was a little fellow, only four or five; and lame, Phinny says: one leg shorter than the other.”

“Oh, that was Algernon! He was little, and he walked nearly sideways,” said Cathie.

“A poor sort of a name, as I view it,” said Miss Pitts, “but Nonny sounds full as well as Algernon.”

Phineas held open the gate for Miss Pitts and Cathie, and just then a tall boy came round the corner of the house.

“Please, sir, may I speak to Miss Pitts?” he asked turning to Phineas, and then, without waiting for a response, he sniffed appreciatively. “Cookies! And sugar cookies! With carraway seeds!” he declared. “Oh, why did I not run away in my infancy to an asylum? Then I, too, might have vacations, and sugar cookies.”

“Well, Leander, you may have one sugar cooky,” said Miss Pitts. “You don’t appear to be very busy for a hired man,” she continued, as Len helped himself to a cooky, and sat down on the front door-step.

Phinny had hired the older boy to help him with the farm work. They were great cronies, and Len had been a good friend to Phinny ever since the boy came to live at Mrs. Burton’s.

“I must go and harness Splendid,” said Phineas. “Come on and help me put in the hay, Len.”

“Yes, sir,” responded Len, with mock humility; “be sure and keep me busy; don’t let a poor, tired man have a moment’s rest.”

“Mother Burton is coming over just as soon as she takes her bread out of the oven,” said Cathie, as the boys disappeared round the corner of the house.

“We’ll have Leander put the table right under the big Baldwin tree,” said Miss Pitts, “and you just step over to Mrs. Jones’s and ask her to let you pick all the sweet-williams she can spare, and we’ll trim the table.”

“I do wish I could see the boys when they get their first look at this place,” said Cathie, with a little pleading note in her voice.

Miss Pitts shook her head. “I guess ’twill be better if they don’t see too many new faces,” she replied.

“Phinny and Leander and I can get along real well, and those boys will enjoy their dinner better not to see anybody but just the family.”

Cathie started off on her errand, promising to be back in good season; and Miss Pitts went into “Orchard House,” put away her pretty straw hat and gray cotton gloves and green sunshade, and carried the basket of cookies to the pantry, where the chickens were all ready for the oven.

“I’ll put my apron right on, and start up the fire,” she said aloud, and nodded approvingly when she found that Phineas had laid the fire all ready to light, and that the wood-box was filled with dry wood.

“He’s a thoughtful boy if ever there was one,” she declared.

As Phinny drove out of the yard on his way to the Junction, Len appeared at the kitchen door with a big basket of freshly gathered peas.

“I’ll shell these,” he said, sitting down in the doorway. “I’d just as soon sit here and shell peas as to hoe potatoes in the hot sun; and it’s some comfort to smell a good dinner even if I can’t taste it.”

“I don’t worry about you, Leander, not a mite,” responded Miss Pitts cheerfully. But Leander shook his head dolefully.

Before the peas were shelled Cathie returned with a quantity of sweet-williams.

“Your mother’s sweet-william bed looks just like a lovely carpet, Len,” she declared.

“Ought to. I work pretty near all night every other day weeding it,” Len responded.

“You fix the flowers just the way you think they’ll be prettiest, Cathie,” said Miss Pitts, “and then you can run right home. I’ll come over this afternoon and tell you all about it.”

“May I use one of those shallow tin pans?” asked Cathie.

“Use anything you want to,” responded Miss Pitts; and Cathie, with the shining new tin and the basket of flowers went down the little slope toward the orchard. The table stood under the big Baldwin apple tree, whose huge branches made a pleasant circle of shade. It was covered with a white cloth. Cathie put the tin in the center of the table and filled it with the blossoms. Then she ran down to the brook and brought back some of the tall rush-like grasses that grew beside it, and made a border all around the table of the delicate green stems and sweet-williams.

“They’ll think it’s pretty; I know they will. I wish

I could see them when they sit down," she thought, as she walked slowly around the table.

Cathie looked up into the thickly-leaved interwoven branches of the big tree, and made a sudden resolve. "I'll do it," she declared aloud. "Nobody will see me, and I can see them all. And after dinner is over I'll get down and run home, as soon as the boys leave the table."

It seemed a delightful plan to the little girl. She gave a swift look toward the house, but there was no one to be seen. Then she went close to the big tree. "It's just right to climb," she thought, for one stout limb branched out very near the ground, and it was very easy for Cathie to pull herself up, and then scramble carefully to a place where, well hidden by the green leaves, she could peer down at the table below. "This is splendid," she thought happily, perching on one stout bough and clasping one above to steady herself. "But I hope they won't be long, for it isn't very comfortable."

But it was a good half-hour before Cathie heard the rattle of the hay-rack, and saw Phinny with his load of boys come driving into the yard. She had already changed her position several times, and now was directly over the table.

Leander and Miss Pitts came hurrying down with

plates of bread and butter, plates of cookies, and dishes of blueberries. Then came Mother Burton with a big pitcher of milk. Then back they all went to return with the steaming chickens, the potatoes and peas. "And there are blueberry pies, besides all this," Cathie whispered to herself a little wonderingly, as she leaned down to get a better look at the asylum boys, who had followed Phineas to the shade of the tree, and were now taking their seats at the table.

## CHAPTER II

### TROUBLES BEGIN

NONNY SYKES sat next to Phinny. He was the youngest of the six boys who were to spend the month of August at Orchard House, and the only one of the group who had been at the asylum when Phinny started out to find a home for himself. Nonny was now nine years old. His left leg was shorter than the other, and, as Cathie said, Nonny walked in a "sideways fashion." He was a very thin little boy, but he had pleasant brown eyes and was always ready to smile.

As he took his seat at the table and looked around Nonny was almost sure that he was dreaming. "Only I wouldn't dream about Matt Warren in a place like this," Nonny thought, with a quick glance toward a good-looking boy at the further end of the table, who had already secured a half of the chicken nearest him, and was heaping his plate with peas and mashed potatoes.

"Goody!" Nonny whispered under his breath, for, as he looked toward Matt, Miss Pitts had reached over Matt's shoulder and taken the plate, saying pleasantly:

“Thank you, Matthew; I’ll pass this plate to Nonny Sykes; but you mustn’t help your friends so generously, or they won’t have any appetite for blueberry pie.”

A little titter ran round the table, and Matt’s dark face flushed angrily. He had now to serve the chicken and vegetables for all the boys before helping himself, with the result that he was the last one at the table to begin his dinner. As Miss Pitts had stood beside him and suggested that Phinny be given a liberal supply of white meat, that the Watson twins should be helped to the legs and a second joint, and advised as to extra spoonfuls of peas, Matthew found, when his own turn came, that the necks of the chickens and bits of skin were about all that remained.

“I guess you started in most too liberally, Matthew,” said Miss Pitts. “It was my intention to help the boys myself, but I’m real glad you did it. Though maybe you’d have fared better if I had served you than you did helping yourself,” and Miss Pitts patted Matthew’s shoulder as if she realized that his share of the dinner was too small.

Matt wriggled uneasily under her hand. He knew that every boy at the table was grinning with delight, and Matt was quite sure that he hated Miss Pitts, who had so cleverly outwitted him.

*The Little Runaways*

From her perch among the branches Cathie looked down and understood all that was happening. "That's a horrid boy," she said to herself. The Watson twins, Charles and Chester, sat next to Matthew, then came Phineas and Nonny, and next to Nonny sat Arthur Joyce and Andrew Hill.

"How homely they are," Cathie thought, as she looked down on Phinny's guests; "all except that hateful boy who served the chicken." Cathie moved a little, and the branch swayed and the leaves rustled. A hard green apple fell and hit Matt on the top of his head.

He jumped up angrily.

"Who threw that?" he demanded, and Phinny was quick to notice that the other boys looked as if they were frightened at the big boy's voice.

"It fell from the tree, Matt. Don't be afraid; nobody'll hurt you," Phinny said quietly.

The other boys exchanged smiles of satisfaction. It was evident that Phinny thought Matt a coward.

"I ain't afraid," grumbled Matt.

"Here comes Mrs. Burton with the blueberry pies," interrupted Miss Pitts. "I guess it will be full as well, Matthew, if I cut the pies, and I'll help you first," and a good quarter of a plump blueberry pie was placed

before Matt. But before he could taste it, down came another green apple, striking the piece of pie with such force as to send the juice up over Matt's clean blouse and into his face.

There was an instant chorus of delight from the other boys as Matt, his face spotted and streaked by the purple juice, sprang to his feet.

"There's somebody up in that tree," he declared angrily, "and I'm going to find out who it is. I won't sit here and have things thrown at me," and Matt turned toward the tree.

Cathie nearly let go of the branch to which she was clinging. What would become of her if that boy climbed into the tree and discovered her! She wished with all her heart that she had obeyed Miss Pitts and was safely at home. Then she heard Phinny's voice, sharper than she had ever known it: "Matt, sit down!"

There was a little silence, and Cathie got courage to look down again. Matt was standing at one end of the table, and Phinny at the other. Matt was two years younger than Phinny, but he was a sturdy, strongly built boy, and as Cathie looked she wondered to herself why Matt, who was nearly fourteen, should still be in the asylum. "I guess it's because he wants to fight everybody," she decided. "I didn't throw

either of those apples, but that boy wouldn't believe it if he found me up here."

"Here, Matthew, wipe your face with this towel, and I'm dreadful afraid those spots won't wash out of your waist; blueberry stains are about the worst stains there are. I'll put it to soak to-night in cold water, though. You sit right down, and I'll give you another piece of pie. Here, Phinny, you just fill Matthew's glass with milk and pass the sugar cookies. The way we are pestered with squirrels! And foxes! Phinny, you tell the boys how Fred Dwight set a trap for that chicken-stealing fox."

"My! Isn't Miss Pitts splendid!" thought Cathie, with a long breath of relief as she saw Matthew draw his chair back to the table and sit down.

Matthew began to think better of Miss Pitts when he saw his second piece of pie, and forgot to be angry at Phinny when he tasted the sugar cookies.

Cathie began to feel very tired and uncomfortable. Her hands and arms were cramped, and it was hard to keep quiet. "I wish they would go away. I *must* move," she thought. Then a new fear took possession of her. Nonny had finished his dinner, and now his bright eyes were looking straight up among the branches of the apple tree.

“He sees me! I know he does,” thought Cathie. And the branches about her began to move, bending and swaying, for Cathie, nervous and afraid, had stepped from one bough to another. A number of apples now fell, striking the table and bouncing off on to the grass. Phinny sprang up so quickly that his chair upset.

“Come on, boys!” he exclaimed. “Come out to the barn and see Fred Dwight’s air-ship.”

If Phinny had had time to think he would have given some other reason for getting the boys away from the table; for the air-ship that Fred was making, using the old barn for a workshop, was to have been kept a secret between Fred, Len and Phinny until Fred should have given his permission to tell it.

But Phinny hardly realized what he had said, for looking up he had seen Cathie’s brown gingham dress, and realized that he must get the boys away before they all saw her hiding there; and he spoke almost without realizing what he said.

“Air-ship?” exclaimed Matt, enthusiastically. “I’d give anything to see one,” and, for the first time since his arrival at the farm, the surly look left his face.

The Watson twins were as eager as Matt, and all the

boys, even Nonny, started off instantly. Almost unconsciously Phinny reached out his hand to Nonny, and, as he felt the thin little fingers clasp his, Phinny resolved that Nonny should never go back to the asylum. "I'll find some way to take care of him," he thought.

"Who's Fred Dwight?" questioned Matt, who was now close beside Phineas.

They were now quite a distance from the tree, nearly to the barn. At Matt's question Phineas stopped short.

"Boys!" he said quickly, looking at the eager faces about him. "I've just done a mighty mean thing. I've broken a promise. Fred Dwight is my friend, and I promised not to tell about his air-ship. I'm mighty sorry. But I'm going to ask you boys to forget it. Not to talk about it even to each other."

"All right," said Nonny, looking up into Phinny's face.

"We won't tell!" declared Matt; "he'll never hear us peach on you. Come on; where is the air-ship?" and Matt started toward the old barn.

"Hold on, Matt," called Phinny; "you can't see the air-ship."

"Why not?" questioned Matt, a little defiantly.

“We wouldn’t tell on him, would we, boys?” There was a little murmur of agreement from the others.

For a moment Phinny stood silent, blaming himself bitterly. A nice beginning, he thought to himself. These boys would always remember that he had broken his word.

“Come on,” Matt urged again.

“You can’t see it,” said Phinny briefly, “not until Fred says so. I’ll tell him that you know about it, and ask him to let you have a look at it. That’s the best I can do. Come on and have a look at my sister’s chickens!”

“You got a sister?” asked Nonny.

“Sure,” answered Phinny, who was already making excuses to himself for Cathie’s thoughtless prank. It never occurred to Phineas to blame Cathie for anything. He was always ready to take blame himself.

Mrs. Burton and Len came across the field from Mrs. Burton’s house just as Phinny and his companions disappeared behind the barn in the direction of the chicken yards.

“I don’t see where Cathie is,” said Mrs. Burton a little anxiously. “I hurried home, after I’d helped Eliza what I could, to eat dinner with Cathie, but she wasn’t there!”

“There she is, a part of her!” responded Len, laughingly, pointing down the slope toward the apple tree.

“My soul!” exclaimed Mrs. Burton. For she saw Cathie just swinging herself down from the stout branches. The tan shoes, the brown gingham skirt, and then the braid of yellow hair. And then, as Mrs. Burton looked, Cathie stood safe and sound on solid ground. “If that don’t beat all!” said Mrs. Burton. “She must be hungry as a wolf. I wonder what Eliza Pitts is saying to her?” For they could see Miss Pitts, who had sunk into a chair at the appearance of Cathie’s feet swinging from the tree, and could hear her voice.

“Oh, Miss Pitts is probably praising Cathie, and telling her that no other girl would ever be clever enough to climb a tree,” said Len laughingly.

But Miss Pitts was not praising Cathie.

“Catherine Burton!” she said, as Cathie stood before her with flushed face, her gingham skirt torn from hem to binding, and her left sleeve showing an ugly rent. “If I was ever surprised in all my life I am now. A girl of thirteen, or nearly, to go hiding herself up in that tree. I told you to go home, didn’t I?”

“Yes’m!” answered Cathie meekly.

“Well, here comes your mother. And I must say I

never expected to see the day when I'd be glad that I didn't adopt you."

Cathie put her hand over her eyes and began to cry.

"What is the matter, Cathie?" and Mrs. Burton hurried toward the little girl and put her arm about her.

"Matter!" exclaimed Miss Pitts. "Well, she's been hiding up in that tree and throwing green apples down at the boys. That's what she's been doing!"

"I didn't!" declared Cathie.

"Len, you just take hold and help me with this table," commanded Miss Pitts. "Those boys have eaten enough for ten men. They'll get bread and milk for supper. Now, Martha Burton, I tell you nothing but the truth. Cathie hid herself in that tree," and Miss Pitts pointed an accusing finger toward the apple tree as if it were in some way to blame, "and she threw apples at Matthew Warren."

"I didn't! I didn't!" sobbed Cathie.

## CHAPTER III

### GETTING ACQUAINTED

MATT'S face grew sulky, and he hung back behind the other boys as Phineas led the way toward his new chicken yards behind the Eastman barn.

"These are white Wyandottes," Phinny said, as they came to the first yard where the big snowy fowls strutted proudly about.

The Watson twins exclaimed in delight, and evidently found Wyandottes as wonderful as any aeroplane.

"These are the Rhode Island Reds," continued Phineas.

"I always wanted to see a live chicken," said Arthur Joyce soberly. Everything about Arthur was sober. His hair was a sober brown, and so were his eyes. His skin was dull, and even his blouse was a sober tint of brown.

"'See a live chicken.' Humph!" repeated Matt scornfully. "I guess that's about all you can see here."

"You can see a good many things besides chickens,

Matt, if you want to," said Phineas pleasantly. "Why, the first summer I came here I saw a bear, and killed it, too."

There was a chorus of exclamations and questions from the boys, and the twins forgot the chickens as they listened to Phinny's story of killing the bear in the blueberry pasture.

"Gee!" exclaimed Matt, "wasn't that great! Do you suppose there are any bears around here now?"

"I don't believe there's a bear within ten miles. But you can never be sure," responded Phineas.

Matt's face grew more hopeful. The prospect of a live bear, even if it was ten miles away, made life much more interesting to him. And, as Phinny told of a family of foxes that lived in a rocky pasture beyond the field, and of the trout to be found in the brook that ran through the orchard, Matt almost forgot his disappointment in not seeing the flying-machine.

"To-morrow, boys, I'm going to ask three of you to help Len Jones hoe potatoes, and the other three to go blueberrying with me."

"I can go blueberrying," said Nonny.

"Yes, you and Andrew, Arthur and I will go after berries. We'll take our luncheon and stay all day. And Matt, Charles and Chester can help Len."

Matt made no response. The other boys all declared their approval, but Matthew grew silent. He was thinking to himself that it was just as he had supposed it would be. This month in the country meant that he would have to work. Hoe potatoes in the hot sun! He made his mind up that he would do nothing of the sort.

"I'd rather go after berries," he said.

"All right," Phineas agreed readily. "Arthur can help Len, and you can work at the hoeing the next day with me."

"Humph!" muttered the boy.

Phineas did not notice Matt's surliness. He felt sure that before the month was over Matt would feel better-natured; and Phineas had no idea of neglecting his farm work. "If I don't keep things moving and make this place pay I can't get to college or do much of anything," he said to himself.

It was late in the afternoon when Phineas brought the boys back to Orchard House. Len had gone home, and Miss Pitts was setting the table for the boys' supper. Although she had declared that bread and milk was all they would get, there was a big bowl of blueberries on the table, and a big loaf of freshly baked sponge cake.

"I'll be over first thing in the morning," said Phineas, as he bade Miss Pitts and the boys good-night.

As Phinny walked home across the field he thought over the afternoon with a little sense of disappointment and discouragement. The twins seemed silent and rather stupid, Phinny decided, Andrew and Arthur did not look as if they could enjoy much, and Nonny—well, Phineas said to himself that Nonny should have a good time anyway. But Matt was the real trouble. Phinny had been quick to see that this big-framed, good-looking boy was determined to do as he pleased, and did not care much about anything outside of his own pleasure. And Cathie! Phineas wondered what had possessed his sister to hide in the apple tree. "She's prided herself on being almost 'grown-up,' and then to do a thing like that! She might have fallen right on to the table," he thought.

Mrs. Burton stood in the doorway watching Phinny as he came slowly along.

"Dear me! I do hope Phinny isn't blaming Catherine," she thought a little anxiously.

"Supper's all ready, Phineas," she said as Phinny came up the steps. "Well, they seem just the kind of boys you wanted, don't they, son? Homely as they can be, every one of 'em, except that Matthew Warren,

and he's ugly enough inside to make him act homely."

"Nonny's all right," answered Phinny. "I'm tired," he declared with a little sigh, sitting down at the table.

"My land, Phinny! You don't suppose you're going to be sick, do you?" Mrs. Burton asked anxiously. "I've known you to work from sunrise to sunset and never say a word about being tired, and to-day you've just been playing about, so to speak, and if you feel tired I'm afraid you're going to be sick."

"It's that Matt Warren! I know," declared Cathie before Phineas could respond. "When that apple struck him he was sure that some one threw it. And when the second one fell into his blueberry pie, he was as mad as he could be."

Phineas drew a little sigh of relief. "You didn't throw the apples, then?" he exclaimed.

Cathie stamped her foot angrily. "Phinny Trot Burton!" she exclaimed, "you ought to know I wouldn't throw apples at him."

"You hid in the tree," responded Phineas, and he looked at Cathie as if to say that hiding in the apple tree was just as bad as throwing apples.

"Children!" came Mother Burton's warning voice, "I don't want to hear another word about that old

Baldwin apple tree. I'm only too thankful that Cathie didn't fall out of it and break her neck. And as for you, Phineas, you've got just what you've wanted: six homely, useless boys. Now let's see you make the best of it. You think you're pretty tired to-night, Phineas, but it's nothing to what you will be before August ends. Now, Cathie, you help him to some of that creamed fish."

Phinny smiled up at Mrs. Burton as she patted his shoulder, and Cathie heaped his plate with creamed fish, a baked potato and two pieces of corn bread.

"I was silly to climb that tree," Cathie declared. "What do you suppose makes me do such things?" for Cathie had often "forgot to think," as she would explain her adventures.

Phinny smiled, and so did Mother Burton, at Cathie's question.

"You knew I was up there, Phinny, didn't you?" Cathie continued.

Phinny nodded. "That's why I hurried the boys away," he said. "There's no harm done, Cathie! Don't feel bad about it."

"Miss Pitts was horrid! She wouldn't believe me when I said I didn't throw the apples," said Cathie, helping herself to custard.

“Well, well, Cathie!” said Mrs. Burton, a little reprovingly. “Eliza sets the world by you. I’ll step over after supper and tell her the truth about that tree.”

Phinny laughed. “Anybody would think to hear you, Mother Burton, that the apple tree was to blame,” he said.

Phinny was up before any one else in the house the next morning. He filled Mother Burton’s wood-box, milked the cow, fed Splendid, his pretty young horse, and ran across to Orchard Farm. He was a little surprised to find the farmhouse door open, the wood-box filled, and the kitchen fire started. As he stood just inside the door a small figure came up the path with a big bunch of ox-eyed daisies.

“Hello! You’re out early, Nonny!” said Phineas, going to meet the boy.

“Got these to put on the table,” Nonny explained a little timidly. Miss Pitts came bustling out of the pantry as they returned to the house.

“I’ll go up and call Matt and Andrew,” said Phinny, “for it’s quite a walk to the berry pasture and I want to get an early start. The boys who are going to help Len may sleep if they want to, and if you’re willing, Miss Pitts.”

“Just as well as not,” agreed Miss Pitts. “I’m going

to make a cook of every one of these boys before the month's over," she continued, "so that wherever they are they can help themselves."

"I can wash dishes," said Nonny, who was putting his daisies in an old brown pitcher.

"That's a great help," said Miss Pitts.

Andrew Hill was wide awake, but Matt did not waken easily, and declared that he was too sleepy to get up.

"That's good," laughed Phinny; "sleep as long as you want to. I'm going to show Andrew and Nonny the place where I killed the bear. You can help Len when you do get up."

But Matthew was suddenly wide awake, and quite ready for breakfast with Nonny and Andrew, and when Phinny returned from his own breakfast the three boys were waiting to start. Phinny brought four good-sized baskets; the three empty ones he gave to his companions.

"I'll carry the lunch," he said.

"What are you going to do with so many berries?" asked Matt.

"Part of them are for pies and puddings for you boys to eat, and part are to sell to pay for the flour to make the pies and puddings," responded Phinny.

"I thought we'd have to earn our board!" said Matt, a little scornfully.

"I've earned mine ever since I came here, or tried to," Phinny responded pleasantly. "I thought perhaps you boys would like the chance."

"Sure!" declared Andrew, with more enthusiasm than he had yet shown. "I thought maybe I could find me a place to work down here; I mean a place to work steady." And he looked at Phineas hopefully.

"Perhaps you can," replied Phineas.

Nonny kept close beside Phinny; he seemed to realize that he had found a friend. Andrew began to ask questions about farming, which Phinny was glad to answer. Matt stalked along, gloomy and silent. "Pick berries to sell, eh?" he thought to himself. "A great kind of a vacation." He'd find a way to show this smart Phineas Burton that he couldn't make Matt Warren work, he resolved.

But his sulkiness did not trouble the others. The blue August sky, the line of distant woods, were a delight to Andrew and Nonny, and the fragrance of the pastures and fields was all about them, and Andrew and Nonny began to think that life was full of wonderful and beautiful days.

## CHAPTER IV

### MATT'S CHOICE

“Now, Leander, I want to give you a word of warning about those Watson twins and Arthur Joyce. It's eight o'clock now, and about ten I shall come to this door and wave my apron. You keep a lookout, and when you see me waving you send those boys right up to the house.”

Miss Pitts stood in the doorway of Orchard House, and Len, leaning on his hoe, stood in front of her. The three boys were helping Cathie feed the chickens. Cathie had decided, as she peered down from the apple tree, that the Watson twins were really the homeliest boys that she had ever seen. And as she told them about the chickens, what kinds of food they liked best, and how many eggs Phinny sold each week, and no response came, she began to think Charles and Chester were as stupid as they were homely. But it was not stupidity. The twins were very shy, and Cathie was the first girl outside the asylum who had ever spoken to them.

“Do you want me to leave off work and come up to

the house with the other boys, Miss Pitts?" questioned Len.

"Just as you please about that, Leander. I'm not paying your wages," responded Miss Pitts.

"I can see just how it's going to be," said Len. "I'll be worked to death."

"That's for you to decide, Leander," and Miss Pitts and Len exchanged a friendly smile of understanding as the tall boy started off across the yard, and Miss Pitts stood waiting for Cathie.

Mrs. Burton had told Miss Pitts "all about that Baldwin apple tree," and Miss Pitts quite understood that Cathie had not thrown the apples which had struck Matt and sent the blueberry juice over his blouse.

"Cathie," Miss Pitts said very soberly, as the little girl reached the door, "I guess you'll have to forgive me for saying what I did about your throwing those apples. I ought to have known that if you said you didn't throw them, why, you didn't."

Cathie's face was very sober. "Yes'm," she responded. "I didn't suppose you'd think I threw the apples. But I'm real sorry I climbed up in that tree. I don't know what made me."

"You come in and have a cooky," suggested Miss Pitts, and in a few moments Cathie and Miss Pitts

were busy with the morning work of Orchard House, as good friends as ever.

“I’m going to be just as patient as I can be with the way these boys do things and don’t do things,” Miss Pitts said when they found that Matthew Warren had thrown his pillow on the floor, that Arthur Joyce had worn his best clothes into the potato field, and that the Watson twins had carefully wrapped their best shoes in their blouses and put them under their beds.

“Mother Burton and I are going over to the village this afternoon,” said Cathie. “Do you want us to stop at your shop?”

“I should admire to have you,” declared Miss Pitts, “and you tell Lina Simpkins not to make any extra effort about putting things to rights. Land knows where I’d find anything if she should start to set things in order.”

Cathie promised, and when she started for home it was just ten o’clock, and Miss Pitts was at the door waving her apron. Miss Pitts stood there until she saw the three boys coming across the field, then she stepped to the pantry and brought out a pitcher filled with milk, and a loaf of molasses gingerbread.

“’Twon’t hurt ’em a mite,” she said aloud as if in response to some unseen objector.

The boys looked warm and tired as they went into the shed to wash their hands and splash the cool water over their faces.

“Sit down on the steps a minute, boys,” called Miss Pitts, and the boys obeyed. Their faces brightened when Miss Pitts put the tin cups and pitcher of milk on the top step, and told them to help themselves, and in a moment returned with the gingerbread.

“I guess you can divide that gingerbread without my help,” she said smilingly.

The boys nodded silently, and Miss Pitts returned to the house.

“It looks to me as if those boys feel most too old to enjoy gingerbread,” she thought, as she listened a moment for some word of satisfaction from her guests. But had she looked back she would have changed her mind. The Watson twins were stamping their bare feet with delight, and Arthur Joyce’s face fairly beamed with satisfaction as he broke the gingerbread into three equal parts.

“I guess we’re goin’ to have a good time,” Chester Watson whispered to his brother, between bites of gingerbread. His brother nodded. He could not waste time, just then, in words.

When the last crumb of gingerbread and the last

drop of milk had disappeared, Arthur picked up the plate and pitcher and carried them carefully into the kitchen. Miss Pitts was not there. Arthur carried the dishes to the sink, rinsed them thoroughly and stood them on the broad, freshly scoured sink shelf. Then he tiptoed back to the door-steps.

“Len said we could play around till noon,” Chester remarked soberly.

“What’s ‘play around’?” questioned his brother, as if he supposed “around” to be some kind of a game. Neither of the other boys replied. They did not know much about games.

“I guess we could go down to the brook,” ventured Arthur; and Miss Pitts, who was sitting in the front doorway shelling peas, saw three sedate little boys walk down the little slope toward the brook.

“Why don’t they run?” she whispered to herself. “Land, I suppose the yard to an orphan asylum ain’t scarcely big enough for boys to race about in,” and Miss Pitts said to herself that it was a blessed thing that Cathie and Phineas had come to Skillings Village.

The boys looked at the clear brook, and at the clean white pebbles over which it flowed. They walked along a little way, now and then dipping their toes into the water.

“Let’s wade!” exclaimed Arthur. “Nobody’ll care. It won’t be any harm,” and in a moment the three boys with their knickerbockers rolled well up over their knees were wading happily up the stream.

It was Chester who saw the first pollywog, but Charles was the first boy to catch one. By this time they were all talking, calling to each other from different places where each boy was walling up a little pool to put the pollywogs in. They even forgot to be careful of their clothes. It was the happiest morning the three boys had ever known. And when Miss Pitts rang the dinner bell, they looked at each other almost in terror.

“What will she say when she sees our clothes?” Arthur asked a little fearfully. The Watson twins did not answer. But they hurried to the house. It might be very wrong to have the sleeves of your blouse sopping wet, but to be late to dinner would be even worse, they thought, and reached the house just as Len appeared bringing water to fill the big pails in the shed.

“See here,” he called to the boys; “after this you boys look out for the wood and water supply of Orchard House. Keep these pails filled with water, and that wood-box full of wood.”

“Yes, sir,” the three boys answered in chorus, and

Len turned quickly away that they might not see him smile. He was very well satisfied, however, to have them call him "Sir."

"I'm going to take you boys fishing this afternoon. I'll be over right after dinner," he said as he started off across the fields toward his own home.

The boys quite forgot their wet blouses and knickerbockers, and stood looking at each other in delight. "I knew a feller once who'd been fishin'," Arthur managed to say, and just then Miss Pitts called "Dinner's all ready," and they went into the big, cool dining-room.

"Well, you've found the brook, I see," Miss Pitts remarked smilingly. "You get Phinny to tell you about that black pool near the old stone bridge; that's the only dangerous place in the brook."

"She don't care if our blouses are wet!" Charles whispered to his brother, and all at once they realized that they were having a good time, and that Miss Pitts wanted them to have a good time.

"We're going fishin' this afternoon with Len!" announced Arthur.

"We found pollywogs in the brook!" added Chester, and Charles helped himself to butter for the first time in his life, while Miss Pitts resolved that they should

have custard pie as well as blueberry pie, and told them that Len knew all the best places to catch trout, and that perhaps he'd take them up to Long Pond some day after pickerel.

She stood in the doorway and watched them start off for their afternoon's sport, and when they all turned and waved their hats to her she waved her apron in response, and went back to her work singing "Sweet Beulah Land," and thinking that these boys must be a great deal better than most asylum boys.

It was about three in the afternoon when Phinny, with Nonny close beside him, Matt and Andrew appeared with their baskets of berries.

"Where are the other boys?" Phinny asked.

"Len's taken them fishing," replied Miss Pitts. "I guess they've had a real good time to-day. They had a little lunch about ten, and then played about the brook until dinner time, and Len started them right off as soon as they finished dinner."

Matt set down his basket with such a thump that some of the berries rolled out on the floor.

"I thought you said they were going to hoe potatoes to-day," he exclaimed angrily, turning toward Phineas.

"I didn't say all day, did I?" responded Phinny. "You had your choice, Matt."

“Here’s your milk and gingerbread,” said Miss Pitts ;  
“the other boys had theirs this morning, and you have  
yours now ; that’s all the difference.”

“I’ve got to get these berries ready to take to the  
Junction,” said Phineas.

“Can’t I help ?” asked Nonny.

“Sure,” answered Phinny. Andrew also offered, but  
Matt said nothing, nor did he help in any way. He  
ate his gingerbread and milk and then, without a word  
to any one, sauntered out of the house and down  
toward the brook.

“I’m afraid we’re going to have trouble with that  
boy,” Miss Pitts said to Phineas, following him into the  
shed.

“I’m afraid so,” Phinny answered, a little soberly.

## CHAPTER V

### MISS MABEL GATES

CATHIE BURTON swung back and forth on the stout gate under the big elm tree in front of the little brown cottage. The strong iron chain creaked as the gate swung out and rattled as it came in. Cathie looked across the road and meadows to the distant woods, and wondered what her friend Helen Harper and Helen's young lady visitor from Boston were doing. Len and Phinny had taken the asylum boys for a day's picnic to Long Pond, and Miss Pitts had gone to her own home for the day, to rest and make sure that Lina Simpkins was proving faithful to her charge. Mrs. Burton was sitting by the window sewing. The day was very warm, and Cathie had wandered down the path to the shade of the big tree.

"I don't know but what Cathie is almost too heavy to swing on that gate," thought Mrs. Burton, as she glanced up from her work. "If those hinges should give way she'd get a fall. But, land, 'twill be time enough to worry when the hinges do break," and Mrs. Burton settled comfortably back in her rocking-chair.

But all at once the creak and rattle ceased, and Mrs. Burton looked out again. Cathie was now standing near the fence. She was standing very erect, and looking down the road toward the village.

Mrs. Burton looked too, and saw a low basket phaeton drawn by two black ponies coming swiftly toward the house.

"I guess it's Helen Harper bringing her company over to see Cathie," thought Mrs. Burton. "I'll step into the pantry and cut some cake and make some lemonade. It'll taste good after their ride."

"Hullo, Cathie!" called Helen, stopping the ponies in front of the gate. "This is my friend Miss Gates."

Miss Gates nodded smilingly, but did not trouble to speak. She had heard all about Cathie, and wondered to herself why Helen Harper wanted an "asylum girl" for a friend. Mabel Gates was sixteen years old, and had been very unfortunate in her bringing up. She was a pupil at the private school where Helen Harper had been a pupil for a year, and, although the two girls were not at all alike, they had become friends; and now Mabel had come for a fortnight's visit with Helen. She was a tall, slender girl, with blue eyes and light hair. Her hands were very white and shapely, and Mabel never forgot to put on gloves

when she went outdoors. If she were only going to sit on the piazza she drew on a pair of loose white chamois gloves. She brought a great many pretty dresses to wear during her visit to the farm, and Cathie looked at her admiringly. Mabel's white lace hat, her dress of white embroidered linen and lace, her white gloves and shoes, all seemed very beautiful to Cathie.

"I'm real glad to see you," Cathie said cordially. "You'll come in and see Mother Burton, won't you?"

"Of course we will," responded Helen. "Jump out, Mabel, and I'll drive the ponies further into the shade."

Mabel liked to think of herself as really grown up. Her skirts were longer than Helen's, and she wore a gold bracelet on each wrist. Cathie nearly exclaimed when she saw that one of these bracelets held a tiny gold watch. Mabel carried a silver bag, and wore a chain and locket. She stood just outside the gate, which Cathie was holding open, until Helen had fastened the ponies, and then linked her arm in Helen's as the girls walked up the path.

Mrs. Burton came to the door to meet them, and kissed Helen, and held out her hand to Mabel with a friendly word of welcome. Mabel responded pleasantly, but she glanced about the sunny sitting-room,

the room that Cathie and Phineas both knew to be the most beautiful room in the world, with a scornful expression. Mabel had heard her father say that Helen Harper's father was one of the richest men in the state, and her mother had been pleased when Mrs. Harper invited Mabel to the farm, but Mabel was beginning to think that her father and mother were mistaken. She had seen Mrs. Harper making bread, and Helen wash dishes; and Helen had not a single ring or bracelet, and generally wore dresses of gingham. Mabel's own father was a bookkeeper for a large woolen mill, and Mabel was growing more confident every day that the Harpers were "only farmers." She looked at Mrs. Burton's neat dress of black and white print, and at Cathie's dress of brown gingham, and at the plain, useful furniture of the little house; if these people were the Harpers' friends, "an old country woman and an asylum girl," she said to herself, she should think Helen would have sense enough to keep quiet about them.

"Your name's Mabel, I believe; well, it's a pretty name," and Mrs. Burton smiled, and thought to herself that Mabel was a pretty girl.

Miss Gates smiled. She had been taught to smile at people, to be pleasant to every one, even to "com-

mon people." It was the proper thing for a young lady to be pleasant. Princess, the big white cat, came into the room and walked straight toward Mabel.

"Oh, what a perfectly lovely cat!" Mabel exclaimed, bending down to stroke the white fur, and quite forgetting, for the moment, to be pleasant and superior.

Cathie's face brightened; perhaps Miss Gates was nice after all, she thought hopefully. "Princess has two pretty white kittens. Would you like to see them?" she asked, crossing the room and kneeling beside the white cat.

"I'd love to," declared Mabel.

Just then Mrs. Burton excused herself for a moment, and returned bringing a tray with the cake and lemonade. Mabel's eyes brightened. She was thirsty, and she loved rich cake, and Mrs. Burton's cake was dark and fruity; she was sure it would be good.

As Mabel ate and drank Helen was telling her friends of all the happenings of the farm.

"I really came over to ask a favor, Mrs. Burton," she said laughingly. "I want to take Cathie home with me for a visit. You can spare her a couple of days, can't you?"

Mabel looked at Helen in surprise. Helen spoke as

if it would be a favor to let Cathie come to the Harper farm. Mabel felt angry and resentful. "She might consider me. It will be a nice thing for me to write to my friends that there's an asylum girl visiting at the Harpers," she thought, suddenly losing her appetite for the pound cake.

"I'd love to go!" exclaimed Cathie.

"Well, you can, just as well as not," said Mrs. Burton. "Miss Pitts being so near, and everybody being so interested in Orchard House will keep me from being lonesome for a couple of days. Cathie, you'd better take your blue linen dress in case you want to dress up," and Mrs. Burton nodded smilingly.

Mrs. Burton thought that Mabel was a nice quiet girl. "She's been brought up real well, I can see that," thought the kind-hearted woman, who mistook Mabel's sulky quiet for natural shyness.

"Run up-stairs, Cathie, and put your things in a basket," suggested Helen, "and I'll show Mabel the kittens."

But Mabel's interest in white kittens had vanished. She wished herself back in the tiny apartment in Boston, but knew that her father and mother were away for a short vacation, and were glad that their daughter was at the Harper farm.

In a short time Cathie appeared with her basket. She had put on a fresh dress of plaided gingham, her hair was tied with a wide white ribbon and she wore the pretty straw hat that Miss Pitts had trimmed for her in the early summer. To Mrs. Burton and Helen Cathie looked very nice indeed. But Mabel was quick to notice that Cathie did not wear any gloves, that her stockings were a cheap cotton weave, and her tan shoes rather scuffed and worn.

“I’ll bring her back Saturday morning, Mrs. Burton,” Helen said, as Cathie, happy and smiling, took her place in the pony carriage.

Mrs. Burton stood at the gate and watched them drive off, and then went back to her quiet sitting-room.

“I’m real glad Cathie’s got such a good friend as Helen; and like as not this pretty Boston girl and Cathie will like each other real well,” and, with these pleasant thoughts for company, Mrs. Burton again took up her sewing.

“Margaret has gone for a drive with Roy,” said Helen, as the ponies climbed the long hill. Margaret was Helen’s younger sister, and Roy was the “grown-up” brother. Roy had graduated from college and was now his father’s right hand man on the Harper farm. It was Roy who had encouraged and helped

Phineas make the old Eastman house into "Orchard House," a vacation home for homeless boys. Mabel had hoped that Roy and Margaret would ask her to drive with them, but although Helen's brothers and sisters were courteous and pleasant toward Mabel, none of them showed much desire for her company, and the task of entertaining her was already becoming rather difficult for Helen. She had thought that Mabel would be interested in Cathie, but before the three girls reached the farm Helen realized that she had been mistaken.

Mabel sat stiff and silent; she only spoke when Cathie or Helen asked her some question. It had not occurred to Cathie that Mabel was displeased to have her as a companion; she thought, as had Mrs. Burton, that Mabel was, perhaps, shy. So Cathie smiled at Mabel in a most friendly fashion, and chattered happily away about the adventures of the boys at Orchard House.

Mrs. Harper gave Cathie a warm welcome. "Take your basket right up-stairs, Cathie. I'm going to give you the extra bed in Mabel's room, so that she can have company," she said with her pleasant smile.

Mabel was already half-way up the stairs, and did not hear what Mrs. Harper said, so that a few moments

later, when Cathie, basket in hand, stood in her chamber door, Mabel looked at her in genuine surprise.

“Didn’t you know I was to share your room?” Cathie asked smilingly.

“What!” exclaimed the older girl.

Cathie nodded. “I always sleep in this room,” she explained, “and Mrs. Harper thought you would like company.”

“Kind, I’m sure,” sniffed Mabel.

“Isn’t she?” responded Cathie, beginning to unpack her basket. “I love to come over here. You must be having a splendid time.”

Mabel did not answer, nor did she speak again while Cathie was in the room. Cathie began to wonder if, after all, Mabel wanted the room to herself. “Maybe she’s homesick,” Cathie thought, and with a friendly “good-bye” she slipped away, and ran down-stairs.

“I suppose Cathie wants to see the bantams first thing,” said Harry Harper, a boy of eighteen, who was to enter the state university that autumn.

“Yes, indeed,” responded Cathie eagerly, for her own highly prized bantams had been a gift from the Harpers.

Mabel, angry and unhappy, was standing at her window looking out, and saw Cathie and Harry walk-



“I ALWAYS SLEEP IN THIS ROOM”



ing across the yard toward the stables, beyond which were the yards, or "runs," for the chickens.

"They all act as if she was of as much importance as I," thought the silly girl. "I suppose they don't know any better. That's what comes of living on a farm."

At this thought Mabel suddenly made a resolve. She would let the Harpers see that there was a difference between Mabel Gates, a pupil from Miss Smith's fashionable school, and Cathie Burton, a girl from an asylum.

"It isn't fair to Helen and Margaret to let them think a girl like that of any consequence," Mabel thought virtuously, remembering that she had heard her mother say that it was important for a girl to know the right kind of people.

"I'll put that girl in her place," she resolved, and at once felt happier, and went down-stairs in a more pleasant frame of mind.

Margaret and Roy had returned from their drive, and Margaret ran off to find Cathie. Helen and Mrs. Harper were on the piazza and did not know that Mabel was standing in the doorway.

"Mother, dear, I'm afraid that Mabel doesn't like Cathie. Perhaps Cathie had better have another room," Helen said.

“Why, of course Mabel will like Cathie,” responded Mrs. Harper in surprise.

“Well,” said Helen, after a little hesitation, “I feel as if Mabel thought herself better than Cathie.”

Mabel, feeling herself very much a young society woman, came out on the piazza, putting on her white gloves.

“I couldn’t help hearing what you and Helen were saying,” she said, looking at Mrs. Harper with her pretty smile. “And Helen is quite right about this girl. Perhaps, Mrs. Harper,” and Mabel’s voice sounded as smooth and superior as that of Miss Smith herself, “living in the country as you do, that you forget how important it is for girls to know the right people!”

For a moment Mrs. Harper regarded Mabel in astonishment. “Oh! You silly, silly girl,” she exclaimed laughingly. “Helen, run up-stairs and change Cathie’s belongings into your room and put Margaret’s things in Mabel’s room.”

Helen was glad to run away. “Mother will say just the right thing to Mabel,” she thought hopefully.

“Cathie is a very dear girl,” Mrs. Harper said pleasantly, “and the girls thought you would like

to have her here. We all want you to enjoy your visit, Mabel."

Mabel, who had flushed angrily at being called "a silly girl," thought that, after all, Mrs. Harper really did appreciate the difference between Cathie Burton and herself.

"Oh, Mrs. Harper, of course I believe in treating such girls with kindness," she responded.

"I see," replied Mrs. Harper thoughtfully, and went down the piazza steps toward the stables where she knew she should find Roy. Mrs. Harper was very apt to go to her eldest son when things troubled her.

Roy listened to his mother's account of Mabel's folly.

"Send her home," he said, as Mrs. Harper finished. "I'll ride to the Junction to-night and telegraph her mother to expect her on the train reaching Old Orchard to-morrow noon." For Mr. and Mrs. Gates were passing their vacation at Old Orchard.

"No, we will wait until to-morrow and see how she behaves," responded Mrs. Harper, "but if she hasn't sense enough to be friendly we can telegraph in the morning."

"All right, mother," agreed the young man with his pleasant smile.

## CHAPTER VI

### MARGARET AND HARRY

“ I DON’T see why Helen asked Mabel Gates to come here, anyway,” Margaret grumbled as she and Cathie walked toward the house. “ She’s always dressed up and trying to act as if she was as old as our Roy.”

“ She’s real pretty,” responded Cathie.

“ Well, you wouldn’t think so if you had lived with her a whole week, and heard her say that mother’s sponge cake was ‘ adorable,’ and Helen’s new hat was ‘ adorable,’ and that the letter from her mother was ‘ adorable.’ Roy says he thinks Mabel is just silly.”

Cathie laughed at Margaret’s reasons for not thinking Mabel pretty.

“ And I’m awfully sorry you are to have her for a roommate,” continued Margaret, who did not know of the change in her mother’s plans ; “ she throws her things all over the place. Helen always goes in and picks up her room, before any one else sees it, in the morning. I think Helen is ashamed of herself for asking Mabel to come here.”

Catherine looked at Margaret in astonishment, for she had expected that all the Harpers must be enjoying the visit. Cathie was really pleased that she was to share Mabel's room, and rather disappointed when Mrs. Harper told Margaret that Cathie was to be Helen's roommate.

"Have I got to room with Mabel? Can't I sleep up attic?" Margaret pleaded. But Mrs. Harper shook her head smilingly.

Mabel came down to supper in a dainty dress of pale blue muslin. It had a sash of lace, and Cathie had never seen so dainty and beautiful a dress.

"She's been here six days and worn fourteen different dresses," Margaret whispered to Cathie, as they took their places at the table. Mabel sat next Roy. Cathie was between Roy and Mrs. Harper.

"Well, Cathie, what about Orchard House?" the young man asked smilingly. "Does Phinny feel satisfied with the boys?"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Cathie enthusiastically. "The boys are having a fine time. Nonny is going to make Mr. Goddard a visit after Orchard House closes."

"These boys are from the asylum where you came from, I suppose?" said Mabel, leaning forward to look at Cathie.

“Yes,” replied the little girl, her face flushing beneath Mabel’s cold stare.

“You must feel as if they were like relations,” continued Mabel; then turning toward Roy she said smilingly: “I suppose I must have heard about asylum children, poor things, but I never really expected to meet any of them.”

Roy looked at her with an amused smile. “Too bad,” he said briefly, and now it was Mabel’s turn to flush, and to feel that she was not quite approved of.

Harry and Margaret were apparently enjoying some joke between themselves. Helen did not look up from her plate. She was blaming herself very bitterly for having asked Mabel to visit Harper farm.

“Well, mother, what about that telegram?” Roy asked laughingly, as they left the supper table; but Mrs. Harper shook her head. She was hoping that something would happen to make Mabel realize her own false estimate of things, or if not that, that Mabel would at least be civil to Cathie. And something did happen, but not exactly what Mrs. Harper would have planned or chosen.

The four girls walked down toward the pasture with Harry, to admire the pretty colts. Helen wondered why Margaret and Harry had so suddenly changed in

their manner toward Mabel. They walked beside her, asking her questions about Boston, about her amusements and friends; and Helen nearly exclaimed aloud when she heard Harry say: "You have the prettiest dresses I've ever seen."

Helen clasped Cathie's arm. "You and I will have to talk to each other," she said laughingly.

When Mabel came back to the piazza it was evident that she had enjoyed her walk. She held her long white gloves in one hand, and was talking rather loudly, telling Harry about a dancing party that she had attended at a friend's house near Boston.

Until it was time for bed Margaret and Harry kept close beside Mabel, and when good-nights were said Mrs. Harper began to think that perhaps it would be possible for Mabel to finish her visit. Margaret and Harry exchanged a few whispered words before Margaret ran up-stairs after Mabel.

Cathie did not feel very happy. She lay awake wondering why Mrs. Harper had changed her to Helen's room. She thought of what Mabel had said to her at the supper table, and of her unfriendly stare, and the tears came into the little girl's eyes. "I wish I was back at Mother Burton's," she thought. Helen was fast asleep, but as Cathie lay in the little white

bed, wakeful and unhappy, she could hear a murmur of voices from the next room. "It's Margaret and Miss Gates," she whispered to herself; she heard muffled, mysterious noises, as if they were up and moving about in their room, and then she went to sleep. When she awoke Margaret was in the room, and Cathie heard her say :

"Yes, Helen, Mabel wants to send a telegram to her father to meet her when the noon train reaches Old Orchard."

"Why!" exclaimed Helen. "She isn't sick, is she?"

"She wants to go," Margaret answered briefly. "And for heaven's sake, Helen, let her!"

"Run and tell mother," said Helen.

When Mabel came down to breakfast her eyes were red, as if she had been crying, and she was very silent. Mrs. Harper looked at Mabel kindly, for she believed the girl to be homesick. Roy drove off to send the telegram and wait for Mr. Gates' reply, and Harry and Margaret insisted on driving Mabel to the station.

It all seemed very queer to Cathie, and when Mabel actually held out her hand to the "asylum girl" and said, "I'm pleased to have met you," Helen and Mrs. Harper looked at each other in astonishment.

They watched Mabel drive off, with Margaret beside her and Harry on the front seat of the carriage.

Helen gave a sigh of relief. "Mabel isn't a bit like what I thought," she said.

"And we are not a bit like what Mabel hoped we would be," responded her mother smilingly. "I thought she seemed to be quite happy when she went to bed. But homesickness is a strange thing."

"We'll have a good time now, Cathie," said Helen, putting her arm over Cathie's shoulder. "Come out on the side piazza, Cathie. You haven't seen Roy's new telescope."

Roy had mounted his fine new telescope on the side porch where there was room to swing it toward various constellations. Roy had already promised Phineas to set a night for him to come over with his guests, and Cathie was greatly interested in all that Helen told her of the wonders of the sky.

"What do you suppose Mabel said when Roy asked her if she was interested in stars?" Helen asked Cathie, as the two girls perched themselves on the porch railing.

Cathie shook her head.

"Well," and Helen gave a little chuckle of delight, "Mabel said that really she went to the theater so little

that she did not know much about stars." The friends laughed together, and then Cathie grew very serious.

"Helen, you don't suppose Mabel went home because you asked me here, do you?" Cathie asked.

"Why, Cathie, Mabel said she was pleased to have met you," responded Helen. "Of course, I know she acted hateful at supper last night. I can't imagine what started her off, but Margaret and Harry know, I'm sure they do, and when Margaret gets home we'll make her tell us."

It was nearly time for the midday dinner when Harry and Margaret appeared. They were both in high spirits. Harry went off in search of his father, and Margaret went in search of Helen and Cathie, and discovered them in the little summer-house in the corner of the rose garden. Helen and Cathie were both busy with their needles. Mrs. Harper had cut out two white blouses for Nonny and, after stitching the seams, had given one to each of the girls to work the buttonholes and sew on the buttons.

"Your visitor has departed. So sorry," declared Margaret, flourishing her handkerchief.

"I didn't suppose that having you for a roommate would send her straight to her mother," responded Helen teasingly.

“Well, it just did!” said Margaret quickly, and without another word turned and ran back toward the house.

Cathie had not seen the quick look that flashed between the sisters, and when Helen a few moments later said that she would go to the house and help her mother with the dinner Cathie was quite content to have a few moments alone. She folded up the white blouse, and sat looking across the garden toward the big, comfortable white house, thinking how pleasant it was to come and visit Helen and Margaret, and how glad Mother Burton would be when she got home. She did not like to think about Mabel Gates, but she could not entirely forget her. “I know they are all glad she’s gone,” Cathie thought, and found a comfort in that.

“Margaret!” Helen exclaimed rushing into her sister’s room where Margaret was brushing her hair. “How did you manage it? I know that somehow you made Mabel Gates want to go.”

“I knew you’d had enough of her,” responded Margaret, turning delightedly toward Helen; “it was Harry’s plan, and it worked splendidly. But I can’t tell you, Helen. Harry and I both promised. But I must say, Helen, I would not have believed it of you,”

and Margaret gave her own hair so violent a brush that she winced under it.

“Believed what?” Helen asked in surprise.

“Why, that you would have picked out a girl like that for a friend. I don’t want to go away to school if the girls are like her.”

“They’re not. And I didn’t pick her out; she picked me out,” responded Helen laughingly. “Of course if you promised Harry I won’t ask you to tell,” she concluded.

“Mother or Cathie don’t mistrust anything, do they?” Margaret questioned, a little anxiously, “because that would spoil it all.”

“No, indeed; mother thinks Mabel was homesick,” replied Helen.

“She was,” said Margaret. “Harry and I will tell you all about our plan some time, Helen.”

“That’s all right,” the elder sister agreed. “It’s Mabel’s own fault, anyway. We all wanted to like her and give her a good time; but she doesn’t know what a good time is.”

“Too selfish. Thinking too much about herself,” agreed Margaret.

## CHAPTER VII

### MATT AND FRED

“WELL, Cathie, I suppose you had a splendid visit. I don't know as I ever saw a more quiet, nicer girl than Helen's friend,” said Mrs. Burton, as she and Cathie were getting supper on the day of Cathie's return from the Harper farm.

“Mabel was homesick, and went to join her mother and father yesterday,” responded Cathie; “and, Mother Burton, Mabel wasn't nearly as nice as she looked.”

“It was hardly to be expected,” said Mrs. Burton. “As I view it we all expect people to be as good as they look, and sometimes that isn't in no way possible. All they can do is to do their best, and I have no doubt Mabel did that.”

Cathie shook her head doubtfully, but Mrs. Burton never encouraged the little girl to criticize other girls, and there were so many things to do, so many interesting things to talk about, that Mabel Gates was soon entirely forgotten.

“Miss Parker and her brother drove over and spent

the afternoon with Miss Pitts yesterday," said Mrs. Burton. "Miss Parker brought over gingerbread and a fine lot of fresh doughnuts, and a pair of splendid stockings for each of the boys. I expect those boys will find it pretty hard to go back to the asylum."

"Perhaps they won't all have to go back," Cathie ventured hopefully, for she knew that Phinny was making many plans for these asylum boys.

Mrs. Burton shook her head. "I guess they'll all have to go back when the month's over," she responded. "I recall the time when Phinny came, before I knew that he was a Higgins, nobody wanted to adopt a boy. And I guess if none of the neighbors wanted a boy like our Phinny they wouldn't be apt to take Matthew Warren into their hearts and homes."

"I wasn't thinking of Matthew; I was thinking of Nonny," responded Cathie.

"Matthew needs help a sight more than that little lame boy. Folks can see Nonny's trouble and be sorry for him. But Matt's trouble is inside; he hardly knows about it himself. He needs a sight of help," declared Mrs. Burton.

It was now the second week of the asylum boys' stay at Orchard House. They had picked berries, hoed potatoes, been on fishing excursions, and helped and

hindered Phinny in many ways. The Watson twins and Nonny Sykes were not large or strong enough to be of much help. Phineas made plans for Matthew Warren, Andrew Hill and Arthur Joyce to do a certain amount of work each day, but never insisted upon it. Andrew proved a great help, and as Miss Pitts watched the little fellow bringing in wood and water, following Phineas about, eager to make himself of use, Miss Pitts declared to herself that she believed Andrew would make just as good a boy as Phineas if he only had a chance. And this was indeed high praise.

“I do hate to have Andrew go back to an asylum,” thought the kind-hearted woman, “and me with a good spare room, facing southeast, warm in winter and cool in summer.” The more Miss Pitts thought of that spare room, and the more she thought of Andrew, the less satisfied she was. But she did not speak to any one of a plan that was rapidly forming itself in her mind: the plan to adopt Andrew.

“I won’t say a word until I’m sure of Eliza Pitts,” she resolved. “I’ve known her to change her mind more’n once in the course of twenty-four hours.”

With the help of Fred Dwight and Len Jones the farm work went on satisfactorily. The shop where Phinny made baskets proved a very interesting place to

the Watson twins, and one stormy day Phinny gave them a lesson in basket-making, greatly to their delight.

Phinny had told Fred about offering to show the flying-machine to the boys, and Fred had looked rather sober for a moment, but on hearing that Phinny had, after all, not taken the boys to the barn loft, where Fred passed most of his leisure time, Fred had declared that his friend was all right.

“I suppose that’s why Matt Warren is always hanging about,” said Fred; “he’s as smiling as a basket of chips whenever I speak to him. Wants to see the air-ship.”

“Matt doesn’t waste any smiles on me,” said Phinny. “He acts as if I were his worst enemy. He hasn’t done a single thing I’ve asked him to do since he came to Orchard Farm.”

“I’d stand for that about once,” declared Fred. “Doesn’t he know whom he has to thank for being here?”

“I guess he doesn’t think it’s much to be thankful for,” replied Phinny.

“Humph,” grunted Fred, resolving to give “that Matt” a piece of his mind at the first opportunity.

The opportunity came promptly, for, as Fred went

up the ladder to the born loft, he heard a sudden exclamation and found Matt standing near the workbench.

Fred was very angry. During the spring term of school Fred had made a very clever model of an aeroplane. The boys of the school had formed an aeroplane club, each making small flying-machines, and they had all agreed that Fred's air-ship was superior to any of the others. Fred had resolved that he would make a real flying-machine, one big enough to use, and Phinny had offered him the big loft of the Eastman barn for his workshop. No one, not even Phinny or Len, Fred's best friends, had ventured up to the loft—and now here stood Matthew Warren.

"That's a dandy," ventured Matt, pointing to the little model.

Fred made no answer, but began looking over his tools very carefully. For a moment neither of the boys spoke, then Matt began, speaking very fast.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "I know just what you think, that I'm an 'asylum boy,' and that it don't matter how you treat me. I'm no account. I guess I know that all right. An asylum boy——"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Fred angrily. "What's 'asylum' got to do with it, anyway? You can't get

out of being mean that way. Phin Burton's an asylum boy too, or you wouldn't be here now, and there isn't a finer chap anywhere. What do you want up here, anyway?"

Matt felt very uncomfortable, but he answered promptly, "I wanted to see the air-ship."

"Couldn't wait until you were asked," sneered Fred.

"I'd get *asked*, wouldn't I?" responded Matt bitterly.

"Oh, get out of here," and Fred started toward the younger boy. Matt stepped backward. He had been standing very near the opening in the floor, and his backward step sent him plunging down. As he felt himself going he gave a yell that reached the ears of Len and Phinny and sent them running toward the barn. Fred scrambled down the ladder, almost falling himself, and found Matt huddled up on the barn floor.

"I'm smashed up, I'm smashed up," screamed Matt, as Fred bent over him.

Fred tried to lift Matt up, but the boy's screams frightened him and when Phinny and Len came running into the barn, they found Fred, white and frightened, leaning over the injured boy. Len lifted Matt into a sitting position. "Your head's all right," declared Len, running his hands firmly over Matt's

head, neck and shoulders ; “and so’s your back. Stand up.”

“I can’t,” whimpered Matt.

“I guess he’s right there ; this left ankle looks bad. Let’s see your arms.”

“Let go—o-oooh !” screamed Matt, and Len’s clasp on the boy’s left arm became more gentle.

“I reckon his arm’s broken,” said Len soberly. “You’d better go after the doctor, Phin ; Fred and I will carry him into the house. Don’t be a baby,” he added sharply, as Matt began to scream and cry ; “there’s nothing very dangerous in a broken arm,” but Matt kept on, and his screams brought Miss Pitts running across the yard closely followed by the twins. Andrew, Arthur and Nonny were spending the day with Mr. Goddard.

“Put him right on my bed,” directed Miss Pitts ; “and now, Fred, you start up the kitchen fire and get me some hot water for that ankle. I guess it isn’t much of a sprain. Stop crying, Matthew. Every boy breaks an arm sooner or later. You ought to be glad that you’ve broken it amongst folks, not way off in some forest or desert.”

Matt’s cries sank to whimpers, and as Len bathed the ankle, and Miss Pitts bolstered him comfortably

in bed he gradually ceased to whimper, and when the doctor arrived he found Matt with a fair degree of courage, and the arm was set, put in splints and in a sling, without any great fuss.

“How did it happen?” asked the doctor.

“Fred Dwight pushed me out of the barn loft!” Matt declared, and a moment later would have given anything to have denied the falsehood.

“Phew!” exclaimed the doctor.

Phinny and Len looked at each other in amazement. But it did not occur to either of them that Matt was lying. In times past Fred had been very mean and unfair to Phinny, and although Fred had changed and seemed kind and friendly the boys knew that he had a quick temper and often acted impulsively.

“He didn’t mean to,” Phinny managed to say, half-questioningly, and the doctor responded quickly:

“Of course he didn’t,” and with a few directions to Miss Pitts, and the promise to call the next day, said good-bye to his patient and departed.

“Where’s Fred?” Len asked.

“He’s gone home,” answered Phinny.

It was decided to fix a cot in the sitting-room for Matt. Before night the swelling about his ankle had nearly disappeared; he did not eat much supper, how-

ever, and lay on his cot, silent and looking very unhappy. Miss Pitts began to think that Matthew was really a better boy than she had realized.

“What about Fred?” Len asked Phinny, as the two friends walked across the field toward Mrs. Burton’s.

“I don’t believe he meant to push him out of the loft. Matt had no business up there anyway,” answered Phinny.

“Humph!” responded Len, thoughtfully. Len was wondering to himself why Fred had not said that he pushed Matt, instead of starting off for home the minute the doctor arrived.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IN THE ORCHARD

“YOU just take this cane, Matthew, and come out and sit in the orchard with me,” said Miss Pitts the morning after the accident.

Matthew was dressed, had eaten an excellent breakfast, and was sitting near one of the front windows watching the other boys playing ball.

“I can’t walk,” he whined.

“Well, I should like to know why not. You stepped across to that window without a mite of help, and your ankle looks all right. The doctor said he guessed it wouldn’t trouble you much.”

“My arm’s broken,” pleaded Matt. For the first time in his life he found himself a person of importance, and he was disposed to make the most of it.

“So it is. A good clean break, the doctor called it. But, land’s sake, Matthew, you don’t have to walk with your arm. I sent Andrew over to Mrs. Burton’s on purpose to get this cane for you. I’ve got a lot of stockings to darn for you boys, and I thought it would be real pleasant for you and me to sit in the orchard.”

Matthew looked at her a little doubtfully, wondering to himself why she wanted his company. But Matt had already learned that Miss Pitts was to be trusted, so with an effort, more apparent than real, he grasped the cane and hobbled after her out into the shady orchard.

“There, I’ve got the big wooden rocker all ready for you,” said Miss Pitts, helping Matthew establish himself in the comfortable cushioned chair. “Now you just place your feet on this chair,” and she carefully lifted Matt’s feet into another chair. “Now, ain’t that complete?” she asked, as she settled herself in a low chair beside him.

“I had Andrew fetch out this little table for my work,” she added, nodding toward a small table that stood between them, “and you help yourself to those ginger cookies whenever you want to. Miss Goddard brought them over this morning.”

Matthew began to think that breaking one’s arm was not so great a misfortune after all. To lay stretched out in the cushioned chairs with a plate of cookies within reach was comfortable; and he did not object to having Miss Pitts beside him. The apple tree cast a pleasant shade, and he could hear the murmur of the brook not far away, and could see the Watson twins,

Andrew and Arthur, playing ball. Nonny was still at Mr. Goddard's, and Matthew had heard Len Jones say that he believed the Goddards meant to adopt Nonny.

Matthew thought about this, as he watched the other boys, and his thoughts were not very happy ones, for he was envying the little lame boy the prospect of a home. "Nobody ever wants me," he thought sullenly, and looked up to meet Miss Pitts' kind eyes.

Just then there came a call from the house: "Miss Pitts! Miss Pitts!"

"I'm right down in the orchard," Miss Pitts called back, and a moment later they saw Cathie coming toward them. She carried a covered basket, and a book.

"Isn't it lovely that Matthew can get out in the orchard?" she exclaimed. "Phinny sent you this book to read, Matt; and Mother Burton said that it would be a good plan for you to have a little lunch about this time, and she sent you over this cup custard and jelly tart," and Cathie opened the basket and set the things on the table where Matthew could easily reach them.

"I can read to you if you want me to," Cathie offered, sitting on the grass at Miss Pitts' feet.

"That will be complete, won't it, Matthew?" said Miss Pitts.



“WHAT’S THE BOOK ABOUT?”



There was a little smile on Matt's face. He nodded. "What's the book about?" he asked.

"It's about men who have invented things: steam-engines, balloons, all sorts of things," replied Cathie.

"Go ahead!" commanded Matt, helping himself to the jelly tart.

In the meadow Phinny, Leander, and Fred were loading the last of the meadow grass on the hay-rack. Fred had appeared at an earlier hour than usual that morning, and inquired anxiously after Matt.

"I'm mighty glad he didn't break his neck," Fred had responded, when told that a broken arm was Matt's chief injury. "I suppose he blames me," Fred added, noticing that neither Len nor Phinny were very cordial to him.

"Yes, he does," responded Len.

"I like that," Fred said sharply. "How was I to know that he'd be foolish enough to walk backward through that trap-door? I was some scared, I can tell you, when I saw him vanish."

Phinny and Len exchanged a quick glance, and their manner toward Fred was instantly more friendly.

"Miss Pitts knows just how to take care of Matt," Phineas said; "they are out in the orchard."

“I’ll take a look at him when we get this load in,” responded Fred. “I was pretty mad when I found Matt sneaking around in the loft; but when I told him to get out I didn’t mean for him to go that way,” and Fred laughed a little, recalling his own terror at the sight of Matt’s form pitching down from the barn loft.

“How did it happen?” questioned Len.

“Didn’t Matt tell you? Poor chap, I yelled at him to ‘get out,’ and he gave a lurch backward,” said Fred. “I’ll let him see the air-ship before he goes back to the asylum; but he’d no business up there.”

When the hay was taken care of Fred went down to the orchard. Len and Phinny watched him as he swung along across the field.

“What made Matt lay it on Fred?” said Phinny.

“Didn’t know what he was saying, I reckon,” Len answered.

As Matthew listened to the story of Robert Fulton and his steamboat, and nibbled at the ginger cookies, he began to think that a broken arm was not a very great misfortune after all. The younger boys, tired of playing ball, had joined the little group in the orchard, and were now sprawled out on the grass listening as eagerly as Matthew himself. Now and then Matthew amused himself by shying a ginger cooky to one or the other of

the boys, an attention that was received with appreciative grins.

“There comes Fred,” said Miss Pitts, as Cathie finished the first chapter of the book, and laid it down on the little table.

Matthew’s face clouded, and he made no response to Fred’s friendly greeting.

“I’m mighty sorry about your arm, Matt. But what on earth made you step backward? Didn’t you know that open place was right back of you?”

Matt heard Miss Pitts’ half-uttered exclamation, and wished that he could hide his face and cry. He was sure that he had never been so unhappy before in all his life; and he found himself saying over and over to himself, “Miss Pitts will despise me. Miss Pitts will despise me.”

“I guess I’m to blame,” Fred continued. “I yelled at you enough to make anybody jump. But as soon as you can climb that ladder, Matt, you may come up and I’ll show you just how an air-ship is made.” And with a friendly nod, Fred said good-bye and returned to his work.

Matt did not look up. He knew Cathie had started for home, and that the other boys had run off toward the brook. And he knew that he should never dare

look at Miss Pitts again. "And she was beginning to like me; I know she was," thought the unhappy boy.

Two big tears went rolling down Matt's cheeks, and he did not even know it. And then a wonderful thing happened. Matthew felt a kind hand smoothing his hair, and heard Miss Pitts saying: "There, there, my dear boy; you didn't know what you were saying when you told the doctor that Fred pushed you. There's the doctor coming to see you now. He's got boys about your age, and he's a real kind man. You tell him all about it. I'll be back soon," and Miss Pitts went to meet the doctor.

Matthew Warren never forgot that morning in the orchard, nor the talk with the grave, serious-eyed physician.

"You'll be all right, Matthew," the doctor assured him, at the end of an hour's visit; and the boy realized that the doctor meant not only his broken arm, but right in the sense of being honorable and truthful.

As Matthew watched the doctor's tall figure cross the yard the boy vowed to himself that he would be honest. "I won't lie! I won't!" he declared.

Matthew was left to himself until dinner time and then Andrew and Arthur appeared to escort him back

to the house. The boys were all eager to help Matt to set his chair at the table, to cut his meat and spread his bread. Miss Pitts smiled kindly upon him, and Matthew made many resolves to himself.

After dinner he went back to his seat in the orchard. Andrew Hill went with him, and the two boys looked over the book Cathie had been reading. Matthew explained the story to the younger boy, and, for the first time, Andrew began to have a friendly feeling toward Matt. While the two boys were talking over the book they heard voices, and looked up to see Phinny and two young men coming toward them.

“These are my friends Mr. Roy Harper and Harry Harper; and this is Matthew Warren and Andrew Hill,” said Phineas.

Roy at once made friends with Andrew, while Phinny and Harry talked with Matthew. Matt was very quiet and humble; he listened to the others, but said very little himself. All at once he began to wonder. “Phinny acts as if he was just as good as those young men,” he thought. “And he used to be an asylum boy.” And then he recalled Fred’s scornful exclamation of “What’s the asylum got to do with it, anyway?” New ideas were coming very rapidly to Matthew. A new world was opening all around him.

It was as Miss Pitts said: he needed help to understand himself.

“You must come over and see our farm before you return to Boston,” Roy said, as he bade Matt good-bye, and Phineas promised that he would drive Matt over.

Matthew watched the boys, as he had earlier watched the doctor. But he was not thinking about them or about visiting their farm. He was thinking about Phinny. “He’s an asylum boy, but everybody likes him; and he’s hiring boys older than he is to work for him, and he’s helping us fellows.” Matthew began to feel ashamed. “I haven’t helped a bit, not as much as Nonny. And now I’ve broken my arm and I can’t help.”

Unconsciously Matt had spoken aloud; he had not seen Miss Pitts approaching and when he heard her say, “Now, Matthew dear, don’t you worry; you’re going to help as soon as you can,” he gave a little jump of surprise.

“‘Matthew dear,’” he repeated to himself. Then he turned his face and hid it on the cushioned back of the old wooden rocker and began to cry.

Miss Pitts picked up her work-basket and sat down beside him.

## CHAPTER IX

### MATTS OWNS UP

MATT'S ankle continued to trouble him for several days, and it was about all he could do to hobble down to his pleasant seat in the orchard.

"Too bad you're missing all the good times the other boys are having," Fred Dwight said to him, stopping on his way to the lower field.

Matt did not reply; he was turning over the pages of the book Phinny had lent him, and in which he was greatly interested.

"I say," continued Fred, who stood leaning on his hoe, "I'm mighty sorry I yelled out at you the way I did. You wouldn't have got that tumble if I'd been civil."

Matt looked up in surprise. It seemed to the boy that his fall from the barn loft had turned the world over for him. Everybody was kind to him. The boys, Mrs. Burton, the neighbors, and here was Fred Dwight saying that he was sorry for having spoken sharply.

“I’ve been thinking of something that perhaps will help you pass the time,” continued Fred. “Has Phinny Burton told you about our Aeroplane Club?”

Matt shook his head. Fred told him how the older boys of the village school had each made an air-ship, and then had races to see which model would go the best. “And my model won,” Fred concluded; “it’s the one you saw in the loft, and I thought perhaps you’d like to look it over and see it fly.”

“Sure,” exclaimed Matt.

“I’ll fetch it right down,” said Fred, dropping his hoe and running off toward the barn. He was soon back again, and Matt listened eagerly as Fred explained how the little air-ship was made. Then he gave it a toss into the air, and the little craft sailed off for a short flight, and sank gracefully down nearly at the feet of Miss Pitts, who was coming down to bring Matthew a glass of milk.

“That’s real clever of you, Fred,” she said admiringly.

Fred brought the tiny air-ship back and rested it on the table beside Matthew.

“I wish I could make one,” Matt exclaimed.

“Go ahead and try; I’ll help you.”

“With a broken arm?” responded Matt.

“Not so easy as if you had two good hands, but you could do it. Think it over,” and picking up his hoe Fred started off.

“Fred talks just right,” declared Miss Pitts. “Two hands are better than one, but if it so happens that one hand is all you have, why, use it the best you can. I guess I should be proud enough if you made an air-ship, Matthew.”

“Of me?” the boy questioned, as if surprised.

“Of course,” answered Miss Pitts.

There was a little silence, and then Matt spoke. “What’s the use of my trying? By the time I got it finished, if I ever did finish it, I’d have to go back to the asylum. They don’t want anything of that kind at the asylum.”

It was the old sulky Matt again, but Miss Pitts looked at him more kindly than ever.

“Now, Matthew, I wish you’d try just to please me. To-morrow you and I will walk across the field to Mrs. Burton’s, and Phinny will let you use his work-bench, and get you things to work with, and you can go over every day. And as for going back to the asylum, Phinny says he plans to have you stay till your arm is well, and that’ll be a good month longer.”

Matt’s face brightened. He straightened himself

from his lounging position, and looked at Miss Pitts hopefully. "I guess I could go as far as Mrs. Burton's to-day," he said.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you could," Miss Pitts assured him, and Matt was out of the chair in a moment, cane in hand, eager to start.

Phinny was at home, busy sorting out baskets for which he had received an order, and was enthusiastic over the idea of Matt's beginning work on an aeroplane.

"It's fine of you to want to do it, Matt," he declared admiringly. "Mr. Goddard says a 'handicap' is one of the best things for a boy to have to make him succeed."

"What's a handicap?" asked Matt.

"Well, I guess a broken arm is a handicap in your case," said Phinny.

"I see," said Matt soberly.

While the two boys were in the shed, Miss Pitts and Mrs. Burton were chatting pleasantly on the side porch.

"Where's Cathie?" questioned Miss Pitts.

"She's gone over to spend the day with Miss Elvira Parker," replied Mrs. Burton.

"I suppose Miss Parker keeps that fine doll in her sitting-room just as usual, doesn't she?" said Miss Pitts.

“Cathie always thinks a good deal of spending a day at the Parkers’.”

Miss Parker had a fine wax doll, “Miss Patricia,” which was the admiration of all the small girls of the neighborhood. It was named “Miss Patricia,” and had the seat of honor in Miss Parker’s sitting-room.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Mrs. Burton. “I’m ’most surprised, Eliza, that Miss Parker and her brother don’t find some nice boy or girl to bring up.”

“Land! Martha, you seem to think that the chief duty of folks is to bring up children. I don’t doubt you’d be real pleased if you knew that I was going to take the care and trouble onto my shoulders of bringing up one of these boys of Phinny’s.”

“No, indeed, Eliza! I well recall the time when my Phinny needed a home, before I knew that he was a Higgins, and what you said at that time. And it was true, every word of it. No, Eliza, I don’t expect you to fetch up a boy; though I will say that you’ve been a perfect wonder with all those asylum boys. Phinny says that Andrew and the twins think the world of you.”

“Martha,” Miss Pitts’ voice was more firm than usual, “I’m thinking very seriously of adopting a boy. Don’t you ask me a question, or say a word

about it, for like as not I may change my mind. I ain't going to talk about it, so I'll step right home now," and before her surprised friend could speak Miss Pitts was down the steps and well started toward Orchard House.

Mrs. Burton looked after her friend, and nodded approvingly.

"I can see through a barn door as well as the next one," she declared, "and Eliza won't make any mistake in adopting Andrew Hill. He's real pleasant spoken, and willing to take right hold wherever he sees a chance to help."

For Mrs. Burton had no doubt that it was Andrew whom Miss Pitts meant to adopt. From the day of the arrival of the asylum boys at Orchard House, Miss Pitts had shown a great liking for the quiet, serious-eyed Andrew, and as Mrs. Burton thought the matter over she was quite sure that Miss Pitts was making a wise selection. She could hear Phinny and Matt in the shed, and at the sound of Matt's laugh she gave a sudden exclamation.

"I declare! That's the first time I've heard that boy laugh," she said to herself. "He's been sulky enough ever since he came to Orchard House; seemed to blame all of us for something or other. But since

he fell out of the loft he's been different. It's hard to know what is best for some boys."

Matt was surprised to find how much he could accomplish with one hand. He had sandpapered and polished three slender strips of lath for the frame to the aeroplane, and listened eagerly to Phinny's explanation of how the motor was made.

At the end of the afternoon Fred Dwight came in to the workroom.

"I'll walk across the field with you, Matt," he said pleasantly, and wondered at the quick flush that came over Matthew's face. "I guess Matt blames me for his tumble," Fred thought to himself.

"Say, Matt," Fred began, when the two boys had nearly reached Orchard House, "I reckon you blame me for that tumble; and I know I was mighty mean, and I'm sorry enough, I can tell you."

Matt stopped short. The fact that he had said that Fred had pushed him from the barn loft had been a shadow from which he could not escape. He had told the truth to the doctor and Miss Pitts, and he knew that they expected him to tell Fred; but Matt had resolved to himself that he never would tell Fred, or confess to Len and Phineas. But now, almost before he realized what he was doing, he exclaimed:

“You’ve nothing to be sorry about. When the doctor asked how it happened I said: ‘Fred Dwight pushed me out of the loft.’”

Matt expected some exclamation of surprise or scorn from Fred, but no word came.

“Come on,” Fred said, after a moment’s silence, and the boys walked on.

“I’ve told Miss Pitts that it’s not true,” Matt continued, “and I told the doctor, too.”

“Say! You didn’t?” exclaimed Fred, with a beaming face. “That’s great, Matt! I don’t wonder you thought I pushed you.”

“I didn’t think you pushed me,” persisted Matt. “I tell you I lied; and I haven’t told Phineas or Len yet; but I will.”

“They know all about how it happened; I told them,” said Fred.

“All the more reason for me to own up,” said Matt.

“Matt,” and Fred’s voice sounded very serious, “you just forget about that barn loft. You’ve proved yourself to be a good chap in owning up. You are all right,” and Fred rested a friendly hand on Matt’s shoulder.

Miss Pitts was at the door and saw the two boys as they said good-night.

“I’ve told Fred,” said Matt, as he hobbled into the house.

Miss Pitts smiled approvingly.

“I knew you would, Matthew; you’re a real good boy,” she responded.

“I guess I could be if I lived with you,” replied Matt; “nobody else ever treated me the way you do. I’d do anything for you.”

If Miss Pitts did not reply, beyond patting Matt’s shoulder, it was because she could not trust her voice to speak. But it was Andrew Hill who received the most generous piece of blueberry cake at supper; and it was Andrew whom she asked to walk to the village with her that evening.

## CHAPTER X

### MISS PITTS SURPRISES MATT

“WELL, Phineas, I don't seem to have much of a family this morning,” said Miss Pitts, as Phineas appeared at the kitchen door of Orchard House with a basket of new potatoes.

“There's only ten days more in August,” she continued, “and the Watson twins are visiting at the Parkers' for three days more; Nonny Sykes seems to feel as if he was wasting his time if he wasn't at the Goddards' every minute, and Matt lives over in your workshop when he isn't tagging Len and Fred about. If it wasn't for Andrew and Arthur I could go right home for all the use I am to those boys.”

“That isn't the way Matt feels,” responded Phineas laughingly; “he thinks the sun would stop shining if he couldn't see you every day.”

“Land, Phineas; Matthew mus'n't feel that way,” declared Miss Pitts in a troubled voice.

“Oh, he understands that Andrew is your favorite,”

replied Phinny, "but I guess Matt has an idea that he ought to have had a mother like you. The asylum superintendent wrote me that Matt's tumble was very unlucky, for there was a man in Vermont willing to have Matt on trial."

"Dear me! dear me!" Miss Pitts' voice sounded as if she hardly knew what to say.

"The Harpers want Arthur Joyce to come over to their place this afternoon and stay until to-morrow, so you'll only have Andrew and Matt to-night," said Phinny.

"That's complete," responded Miss Pitts. "Matt tells me that you and Len are going to surprise the other boys next week."

"Matt's in it, too," said Phinny. "You never saw such a clever fellow as Matt is. He does more with that one hand than I ever believed he could do with both hands. And when Len planned for an Archery Club, Matt said he could make the arrows; and he has. They're beauties, too," concluded Phineas enthusiastically.

"Like as not he was fixing feathers last night for those very arrows," suggested Miss Pitts; "he had a lot of turkey feathers and some little pieces of lead that he was at work with all last evening."

“That’s it,” agreed Phinny ; “the bit of lead for the head of the arrow will give it steadiness,” he explained. “Len and Fred made the bows, but the arrows are a lot more important. When the boys get home from their visits the bows and arrows will be all ready for them. We’re going to put up a mark in the orchard for them to practice shooting at.”

“Well, I must be stepping about my work, Phineas ; I want to make a dish of cream-toast for supper. Andrew thinks a good deal of cream-toast.” And Miss Pitts turned back to the kitchen, and Phinny started toward home.

Cathie came running to meet him. “Phinny !” she exclaimed, “I do believe Miss Parker intends to adopt the twins. Honest, I do. The day I visited there she and Mr. Parker were saying that they never should think of adopting *one* boy.”

“I don’t think that’s very hopeful,” said Phinny ; “if they wouldn’t think of adopting one boy it isn’t at all likely they’d take two.”

“You wait and see, Phinny Burton ! When I told Mr. Parker that Charles and Chester had never seen any hens until they came to Orchard House, and that they’d each gained four pounds, he and Miss Parker nodded to each other as pleased as could be.”

“Four pounds is a good deal for a hen to gain in a couple of weeks,” Phinny responded teasingly, but seeing Cathie’s serious face he added soberly, “No, Cathie, I guess we’ll have to make up our minds that all the boys will have to go back to the asylum, except Nonny and Andrew.”

“And Matt; he’ll stay till his arm is all right,” Cathie reminded him. But Phinny looked at her and shook his head.

“I haven’t told you about Matt,” he said, “and I hate to tell him. I know he’s counting on another month here; but the superintendent thinks Matt had better return on the day the other boys go back.”

“Well, Phinny, I think it’s a shame for any one of them to go back. There’s plenty of people all around Skillings Village who could adopt a boy just as well as not,” declared Cathie. “Just see how easy it was for you and me.”

“That sounds like old times,” responded Phinny, for it was Cathie who, on her arrival at Mrs. Burton’s four years ago, had implored every one who spoke to her to give Phinny a home.

“I’ve got a plan, Phinny,” the little girl said, as the boy turned toward the barn, “and every single one of

those boys is going to have a truly home right here in this town."

"Even Matt?" questioned Phinny.

"I'm not sure about Matt," replied Cathie very soberly.

Matt was in Phinny's workroom. He had been sandpapering arrows and thinking happily that he would be at Orchard House, or perhaps in the village with Miss Pitts, for another month. Cathie and Phinny had stopped at the corner of the shed and Matt had heard their conversation: that he was to return to the asylum at the time agreed on, and Cathie's remark that she intended to find homes for all the boys, but was "not sure about Matt." He lost all interest in his arrows, and started for home. So she was "not sure about Matt."

It was a sober-faced boy who limped back to Orchard House. Matt sat down on the door-step, and looked far across the fields to the distant line of tall pines.

All the other boys were to have "truly homes," he thought. He could hear Miss Pitts and Andrew talking together.

"She likes Andrew; she's going to adopt him, I know she is," thought Matt. Two big tears rolled down

Matt's cheeks, and when Miss Pitts came to call him to his supper she was quick to see that Matthew was in trouble.

"Like as not his arm's hurting him; when the bone begins to knit it begins to ache, generally speaking," she thought, selecting the tenderest bits of cold chicken for Matt's plate, and turning a generous portion of sugar and the thick rich cream over his dish of fresh raspberries.

"I'll wash the dishes; may I, Miss Pitts?" Andrew asked eagerly, as if he were requesting a great privilege, "and may I go over to Len Jones's after the milk?"

"I'll be real pleased to have you, Andrew," replied Miss Pitts. "I'm going to set out on the steps a spell with Matthew."

Matt did not look up; he was thinking that Miss Pitts was probably going to tell him that she meant to adopt Andrew.

"Matthew," Miss Pitts began, "I'm going to ask you a real serious question, and I don't want you to answer it until you think it over. You can tell me next week what you decide on. First of all: I want to ask you what you think about Phineas Burton. You can tell me that right now."

“Think he’s fine,” responded Matt. “It’s great, what he’s done for this crowd.”

“Well, I’m real glad, I’m sure, because if I adopt you I shall expect you to sort of pattern after Phineas ; that is as near as you can,” said Miss Pitts.

“Adopt me?” Matt was quite sure that he had not understood Miss Pitts correctly ; or, if he had, that she did not mean what she said.

“Yes, Matthew ; that’s the question I want you to think over,” replied Miss Pitts. “You see, I haven’t much in the way of a house, and no land. I live over my millinery shop ; there’s just five rooms. They’re real comfortable rooms. The back yard is a good-sized yard and I’ve an excellent shed. You’d have to manage to earn your clothes.”

Miss Pitts’ voice was almost apologetic as she turned toward him. “I realize it ain’t much to offer, Matthew, but I do despise to think of you going back to the asylum. But I shan’t blame you a single bit if you’d rather go and take chances of finding a better home.”

“Don’t want no better home,” muttered Matt, who hardly dared trust himself to speak. He wanted to jump about, and wave his arms, and shout. But he did none of those things. He sat very quiet, digging the cane into the grass beside the step.

“You can think it over and tell me next week,” concluded Miss Pitts, starting to go indoors.

Matt clutched at her skirt. “Wait a minute,” he pleaded. “Do you truly want me? I thought you liked Andrew best?”

Miss Pitts sat down again, but the boy’s grasp on her dress did not loosen.

“I’d rather adopt you, Matthew, than any boy I know,” Miss Pitts replied.

Matt let go of the gingham dress and his arm went up across his eyes.

“There, there! If you don’t want to be adopted by an old maid and live over a shop and earn your own clothes, I don’t blame you, Matthew, not a single little bit.

“Now, don’t you feel bad; I just spoke of it,” and Miss Pitts patted Matthew’s shoulder sympathetically.

“I don’t feel bad; I’m glad,” Matt said. “I’d rather be your boy than anybody’s. I—I—I like you, Miss Pitts.”

“Well, that’s complete. Here comes Andrew with the milk. You can talk it over with Phineas. That is, if you’re real sure that you want to stay with me,” responded Miss Pitts.

*The Little Runaways*

Matt's arm came down from his face; his radiant, happy eyes turned toward her.

"Just as sure as sure," he replied. "Do you want folks to know about it?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered; "I'll be real proud. But maybe 'twill be best for me to write the asylum folks first."

"Humph! They'll be glad to see the last of me," Matt assured her.

Andrew came up the path bringing the milk very carefully.

"I like Len Jones," he announced soberly, as Miss Pitts followed him into the kitchen, "and I like his mother, too," Andrew added. "I think she must be very fond of boys."

"Of course she is," agreed Miss Pitts, smiling down at the serious-faced little boy, and thinking to herself that probably Matt would be a much more troublesome boy to bring up than Andrew. "And I guess that's the reason I decided to take Matt," thought Miss Pitts. "Matt certainly needs somebody to be patient, and I've earned patience, being a milliner in this town for thirty years."

As the dusk of the summer evening deepened, and the stars came out, Matt sat on the door-step quiet and

alone. He was thinking that he was the luckiest boy in the world, and Matthew made many good resolves for the future, when he should really be in a "truly" home.

## CHAPTER XI

### AT THE HARPERS'

HELEN and Margaret Harper stood near the stable watching their brother Harry showing Arthur Joyce how to ride horseback. "Dandy," Harry's own saddle horse, seemed to enjoy it as much as Arthur did ; and Arthur had never had such a happy morning.

"Harry says I can tell you about Mabel Gates, if you want to know," Margaret said.

"About Mabel ? Oh, yes," Helen responded, "about her going away. Do you know, Margaret," and Helen laughed, as if amused at her own forgetfulness, "I had nearly forgotten about her going off so suddenly. What did you say to her ?"

"Well," and Margaret hesitated a moment, and then said, "I told her the truth : that we all thought she wasn't polite to Cathie ; and then she said she didn't expect to be invited to meet asylum girls, and then I told her she'd better go home ; and she got right up and packed her trunk."

"But you said it was Harry's plan ?" questioned Helen.

Margaret nodded. "Yes, Harry said he'd be as polite as he could be to her, if I'd just tell her the truth. Harry said somebody ought to tell her, so I did. And then Mabel was mad about it."

"It was all my fault; I ought not to have asked her to visit me," responded Helen; "but what made her so civil to Cathie when she said good-bye?"

"Just showing off," declared Margaret. "I don't think it was your fault at all, Helen. Mabel *looks* all right."

"Well, I don't think Cathie realized how horrid Mabel was," Helen said.

"Do you think I ought to tell mother?" Margaret asked.

The two sisters looked at each other for a moment, and Helen nodded soberly.

"I suppose I must," agreed Margaret, with a sigh, "but you know mother won't like it at all."

"I guess you or Harry had better tell her," Helen said slowly. And a little later, when Arthur Joyce had ridden Dandy down to the main road and back, and had then led the horse down to the pasture, Margaret and her brother went in search of Mrs. Harper.

Helen took up a book from the little table on the porch and tried to read, but she could not fix her

thoughts on reading. She did not see Margaret until dinner, when in response to Helen's questioning look the younger girl said, "Mother's a perfect dear. She always says the right thing."

"Of course," responded Helen, "but neither you nor Harry looks very happy."

"Of course not, after what mother said," replied Margaret, and Helen made no further inquiries.

The Harpers all liked Arthur Joyce, and to the little boy the Harper farm seemed the most beautiful place he had ever seen. Roy had told Phineas to bring the other boys over the next evening to look at the stars through the big telescope, and so it was decided that Arthur should remain until that time.

"I'd like to have Arthur stay right along," Harry Harper told his sisters. "I wish father would ask the little fellow to stay all winter. Wouldn't he have a good time when the snow came, and when Roy began to haul wood?"

If Cathie could have heard Harry she would have felt greatly encouraged, for in her plan to find homes for Phinny's guests she had decided that the Harper farm would be a splendid place for one of the boys.

Mrs. Burton, Miss Pitts and Cathie stood at the gate and watched the boys start for the Harper farm. Len

had harnessed Old Whitey into the hay wagon, and with its half-load of hay it made a very comfortable conveyance. Nonny Sykes sat on one side of Phinny and Matt on the other ; while Andrew Hill and Fred Dwight, who had been included in the invitation, had the other side to themselves. Len sat in front to drive.

“ They’ll have a splendid time,” declared Mrs. Burton waving her apron in response to the gay calls from the hay wagon.

“ I hope the Parkers started in good season, or the twins won’t get there in time for supper ; their horse is so slow,” said Cathie.

“ Washington will see to it that Charles and Chester are in time,” responded Miss Pitts, and, having watched the wagon over the brow of the hill, they walked back to Mrs. Burton’s, where Miss Pitts was to stay until the boys returned in the late evening.

“ This seems to be a boy’s summer, doesn’t it, Cathie ? ” Miss Pitts said as they sat down to their supper. “ But I guess you’ve had a real good time. It must have been real pleasant for you to get acquainted with that pretty girl from Boston who visited Helen.”

“ Mabel Gates,” Cathie responded slowly. “ I guess I didn’t get acquainted with her. She got homesick and started for home.”

“Phinny says that next summer, if Cathie wants to, she may ask six girls from the asylum to Orchard House,” said Mrs. Burton.

“Yes, and keep house for them myself,” declared Cathie eagerly. “Helen Harper has promised to help me.”

“That will be complete,” declared Miss Pitts, “because next year I expect I shall be busy,” and she nodded smilingly, thinking of Matthew’s needing her undivided attention.

“But Matt is to work for Phinny as soon as school closes,” said Cathie. “I heard them talking about it this morning.”

Cathie washed the dishes and put the kitchen in order while Mrs. Burton and Miss Pitts chatted together on the side porch. They talked over the time when Cathie, a little runaway from the Boston asylum, had come walking down the dusty hill to find a home with Mrs. Burton.

“Do you recall, Eliza, how anxious she was to have somebody adopt Phinny? She seemed willing to go back herself if she could find a home for him,” said Mrs. Burton.

“’Twas real lucky for you, Martha, having children like Cathie and Phineas come walking right

into your front door, so to speak," responded Miss Pitts.

"It was the back door," corrected Mrs. Burton. "I recall that I had my leach barrel in the back yard and was making soap the morning Cathie came. And it's just as you say, Eliza; they are both remarkable children."

Miss Pitts had not said that Cathie and Phineas were remarkable, but she was quite ready to agree to it, nevertheless.

"We all thought you liked Andrew the best of any of the boys," continued Mrs. Burton, "and Matt, who made trouble before he had eaten his first dinner, and has kept on making it ever since — Well, Eliza, all I can say is that I think you've got considerable courage."

"The way I look at it," responded Miss Pitts slowly, plaiting her white apron in even folds, "is that Matthew needed somebody like me a sight more than any of the other boys.

"You see, in the first place he's older, nearly thirteen, and I could see plain enough that he was getting right down ugly just on account of nobody in particular caring about him. As I view it his tumble out of the barn loft did Matthew good. He began to get

special attention then, and he needed it, more ways than one."

After Cathie had finished her work she went across the field for a little visit with Len's mother. Mrs. Jones was slightly deaf, so Cathie always tried to speak very distinctly, and Mrs. Jones always enjoyed a visit from the little girl.

Cathie told Mrs. Jones the wonderful news about Matthew Warren.

"Len is most grown up, isn't he, Mrs. Jones?" she added.

"Land, I should hope so," replied Mrs. Jones; "he's a good inch taller than his father."

"And he's going to college next year," added Cathie. "You'll be real lonesome here then, won't you, Mrs. Jones?"

"I ain't one of the lonesome kind; I keep too busy," Mrs. Jones replied briskly. This was rather discouraging to Cathie, but she kept bravely on, for the sake of Andrew.

"Mother Burton and I were real surprised that Miss Pitts didn't want to take Andrew Hill. Andrew's so pleasant and quiet."

"He's most too quiet," responded Mrs. Jones pleasantly. "Why, when he comes over after milk he'll

stand around waiting for ten minutes rather than call me.”

“Don’t you like quiet boys?” Cathie asked. “I thought most grown people did.”

“I can’t say as I do,” replied Mrs. Jones. “Maybe it’s because I’m a little slow of hearing, but if there’s a boy around I like to know it.”

Cathie resolved to have a little talk with Andrew the next morning. If a noisy boy was what Mrs. Jones liked then, Cathie determined, Andrew should be taught to be noisy. For Cathie had decided that Len Jones would make an excellent big brother for little Andrew.

“I must be going home now,” Cathie said a few minutes later, and walked slowly toward Mrs. Burton’s, her mind full of plans by which these asylum boys could secure homes.

She sat down on the lowest porch step beside Mrs. Burton.

“Nonny Sykes has finished his visit with the Goddards, hasn’t he?” asked Mrs. Burton.

“Yes; Nonny’ll be right at Orchard House from now on until September first,” replied Miss Pitts. “I expect it’s going to be real hard for Nonny to go back.”

“Phinny doesn’t plan to have Nonny go back,” Cathie said earnestly; “and, oh, Miss Pitts, isn’t Mr. Goddard going to keep Nonny?”

“Not that I’ve heard of,” replied Miss Pitts with decision.

“Oh, dear!” exclaimed Cathie. It seemed to the little girl that all her plans were doomed to failure. Mrs. Jones liked noisy boys, and Andrew was quiet; Nonny, whom the minister had seemed to like so much, was now to return to Orchard House; “and I suppose the Parkers won’t want the twins, or the Harpers won’t want Arthur,” she exclaimed.

“My soul, Cathie!” exclaimed Mrs. Burton, “you can’t expect everybody in Skillings Village to adopt a boy.”

“I don’t see why not,” declared Cathie. “If you could adopt Phinny and me, I should think other people could adopt one boy.”

“That’s just what I say,” declared Miss Pitts; but Cathie began to feel that the outlook was not as hopeful as she had expected.

While Cathie and her friends made plans for their future the asylum boys were fast approaching the Harper farm. As Len turned Whitey into the driveway Nonny called out: “Look! Look!” and in a

moment there was a chorus of delighted shouts, for glimmering and shining through the dusk shone, from the branches of the trees, from the roof of the piazza and over the door, lights from many colored Japanese lanterns. None of the boys had ever seen anything so pretty.

Arthur Joyce came running to meet the hay wagon and climbed in beside Andrew and Fred. "Say, isn't it great here?" he demanded.

Mrs. Harper had asked the boys to supper, and the little feast was spread on a table on the broad piazza. Mr. Parker and the Watson twins had not yet arrived, and after waiting a little time for them, Mrs. Harper said that the others had better begin. "Mr. Parker and the boys can have their supper when they come," she said.

Roy Harper presided at the head of the table, and Harry, Helen and Margaret waited on their guests. How good the cold chicken salad, the hot rolls and cocoa tasted; and then the delicious ice-cream and sponge cake. And to eat out-of-doors, looking across the fragrant garden lit by swinging Japanese lanterns! It was all very wonderful to the boys from the city asylum. Phinny kept watching the driveway, hoping to see Mr. Parker's black horse.

But the supper was finished and still the Watson twins had not arrived. Roy Harper said it would be a good time for a song, and led the way into the big living-room and sat down at the piano. He and Harry sang a number of college songs, greatly to the boys' delight, and had just finished when there was the sound of steps on the piazza, and a little boy, bareheaded and dusty, limped into the room, and stood looking at them as if too frightened to speak.

"What is it, Chester? What's happened?" exclaimed Phineas, starting toward the boy.

Chester drew a long breath.

"An automobile ran into us," he said in a husky whisper, "and they didn't stop; and we upset, and Mr. Parker can't move and Charles ——" But neither Roy, Len nor Harry wanted to hear the rest of Chester's story.

They were on the way to the stable, and, when Phinny came running out to tell them that Chester said the accident had happened on the steep hill a mile below the Harper farm, a horse was already harnessed, and Roy had the reins in his hand.

"Harry, Len and I will go," Roy said, "and one of us will come right back to let you know what's happened," and, with a word to his horse, he nodded

good-bye to Phineas, and drove swiftly off into the night.

“Don’t worry, Chester, everything is coming out all right,” said Phineas to the boy.

## CHAPTER XII

### BOWS AND ARROWS

“I WISH father were at home; he would know just what to do,” said Helen, as she followed her mother and Phineas back to the piazza.

“Roy will do all that can be done,” replied Mrs. Harper, “and I hope nothing very serious has happened.”

Margaret had persuaded little Chester to eat some of the salad, and the other boys were asking him all sorts of questions.

“We didn’t hear it coming or anything. The first thing I knew it struck us—bang! and was off like a big bat into the darkness,” he said.

Further questioning revealed the fact that the wagon had been knocked over, throwing them all out, and that Mr. Parker was stunned and unable to move from where he fell.

“I guess he’s killed,” declared the boy chokingly. “Charlie wouldn’t let me wait to see. Charlie said for me to run just as fast as I could and get somebody to come and help.”

"P'raps he isn't much hurt," said Matt gently. Nonny looked at the older boy in surprise. Nonny could not remember, in all the time he had been in the asylum, that he heard Matt speak so kindly to one of the boys.

"Maybe it's 'cos his arm's broke," thought the little lame boy.

"Couldn't we help about clearing away?" Phineas asked Mrs. Harper.

"Yes, indeed," she responded, and the boys were soon carefully removing the dishes from the long table, and then Phineas, Helen and Margaret moved the table to the further end of the piazza.

"I hear wheels and voices," declared Matthew, who was standing in the driveway, and in a few moments the even beat of a horse's hoofs was heard, and then Len's voice called out:

"First arrivals from the wreck," and the carriage stopped under the swinging lanterns, and Mr. Parker, moving rather slowly, stepped out, followed by Charlie Watson.

"Roy and Harry are coming with Mr. Parker's horse," Len explained, as he drove off toward the stable followed by Phineas and Arthur Joyce, while the other boys gathered around Charlie Watson. Mr.

Parker, evidently very much shaken by his recent experience, sat down beside Mrs. Harper and told her of the accident, while Helen and Margaret ran to the kitchen to make him a cup of tea, and prepare supper for Charlie.

“These boys did just the right thing,” Mr. Parker declared, resting his hand on Chester’s arm. “When the auto struck us I was thrown headlong and lost consciousness. When I came to Charlie was rubbing my hands, and told me that Chester had gone for help. The old horse wasn’t hurt, I’m glad to say, but I guess there isn’t much more than a sample left of my old wagon.”

If Cathie could have seen Mr. Parker when he and the twins started for home that night, she would have been quite sure that two of Phinny’s boys would find a home.

There was not much time for the boys to look through the telescope, or for Roy to point out the different constellations which could be seen in the August skies; for it was ten o’clock before the little party remembered the object of their visit, and Phinny felt that they must start for home.

“When winter comes, Matthew, you must come over and have another look. I’m glad to hear that we are

going to be neighbors," Roy Harper said, as he bade the boys good-night.

"Thank you," Matthew responded, and as he said good-night to Mrs. Harper he followed Phinny's example and thanked her for inviting him to Harper farm.

Arthur Joyce was very quiet on the ride home. He was thinking about the wonders of the farm, the young colts, the splendid horses, the sleek cattle and the flocks of sheep; and of how friendly Harry Harper had been. "Wisht I could live there," he whispered to himself.

It was a sleepy load of boys that reached Orchard House just before midnight. Len and Phinny bade them good-night at the gate.

"Go easy, fellers, so's not to wake up Miss Pitts," whispered Matt, leading the way on tiptoe up the path to the house.

Nonny kept very close to Matt to-night; he didn't know why, but he had begun to like Matthew. For years Nonny had been afraid of the big boy, but he was sure that he need never be afraid again. "I guess it's because his arm's broke, that's why," Nonny again said to himself.

There was a dim light in the kitchen; the rest of the house was dark and still.

"You take the lamp, Andrew; be careful," commanded Matt; and Andrew obeyed, leading the way up the creaking staircase, followed by the boys who walked as noiselessly as possible.

Miss Pitts smiled as she lay listening. "Bless their hearts," she whispered; "good as gold, every one of 'em. They need only half a chance to make real good men, I'm sure."

The morning after the visit to the Harper farm was stormy. The clouds were dark and heavy, and the rain came steadily down as if it did not mean to stop for a week.

Phinny was over at Orchard House at an early hour, and started a little blaze in the fireplace in the big front room.

He brought over two big covered baskets, and, after his fire was well started, he ran back to his workshop and brought over another.

"It's a fine day for us to finish up the bows and arrows for our Archery Club," Phinny said, as the boys watched him open the baskets and take out several bundles of strips of spruce wood. Each of these strips was about twenty-six inches long, and was very straight of grain.

"Here, Matt; the arrows are your job," said Phinny.

“Just let the boys see those two beauties you have finished, and show them how it’s done. Fred Dwight says that anybody can make a bow, but that an arrow takes a good workman. You see, if an arrow isn’t just right it will never shoot straight, no matter how well it is aimed.”

Matt smiled radiantly at Phinny’s words. Miss Pitts, looking in at the doorway for a moment, turned quickly back to the kitchen.

“When I see Matthew smile like that it’s all I can do not to cry,” she said to herself; “it’s just as if he was so surprised to be treated well that he didn’t know how to show it.

“The fact is, he’s never been appreciated before,” she decided, quite forgetting Matt’s surly, unfriendly manner during the first days of his stay at Orchard House.

“I want Nonny and Andrew to help on the arrows,” said Matt, establishing himself on one end of the big wooden settle near the western window. “You can’t take chances with arrows,” he added thoughtfully, sorting out the sticks of spruce into three piles, and looking over his box of feather arrow-tips which he had trimmed and prepared several days before. The pieces of spruce had already been planed off

to a degree of smoothness, and Matt now showed Nonny and Andrew how to sandpaper away all the rough places, and make the shaft round and smooth.

“I’ll bring over some glue this afternoon to fasten the feather-tips to the arrows,” said Phinny, looking admiringly at the feathers that were lying, all cut to shape, in Matt’s box.

“Phinny,” called Miss Pitts from the kitchen, “I’m going to have pot roast and raspberry pie for dinner, and I want you to go and ask your mother and Cathie to come over and eat dinner with us. There’s more than a plenty; and tell them to fetch their work and spend the afternoon.”

“That means me, too, doesn’t it?” questioned Phinny laughingly, and before Miss Pitts could answer him he was out of the house, and racing down toward home.

There was a pleasant sound of voices and work from the front room of Orchard House. Matt and Nonny had the settle, and Arthur and Andrew were comfortably established on the floor.

“What is an Archery Club, anyway?” asked Nonny, rubbing his piece of sandpaper vigorously up and down

a strip of spruce, already nearly as smooth as wood could be.

“It’s a lot of boys who have bows and arrows and shoot at a mark,” explained Andrew carefully, holding his own strip of wood toward the light, closing one eye as he had noticed Phinny do one day when looking at a piece of work.

“Couldn’t a feller shoot rabbits or bears, maybe, with a bow and arrow?” Nonny asked hopefully. “Indians used to; Miss Goddard read me a splendid story about two Indian boys who lived in the woods, and made themselves clothes out of rabbit skins.”

Andrew stopped polishing his arrow. “Tell some more!” he demanded eagerly. “What else did those fellows do?”

“They made a brush house,” Nonny went on slowly, “and when winter came they packed snow hard down all over the brush, and the snow froze and the inside was warm,” declared Nonny, “and they caught fish, and roasted the rabbits. Oh, I tell you, they lived very well.”

Andrew sat staring out into the rain. He was thinking of a splendid place where Indian boys could live.

He had seen it one day when Len had taken them all on a fishing trip to Long Pond. Andrew remembered the thick, close-growing branches of the spruce and fir trees. Then he looked at the arrows, and began work again.

"Did you fellers know that Miss Pitts is going to adopt me?" Matt asked, looking at Andrew a little anxiously; for Matt, like all the others, had believed that Andrew would be the one if Miss Pitts decided to give a home to any one of the boys. She certainly seemed to like him best.

Andrew nodded.

"Funny," said Arthur Joyce, from his seat on the floor. "Nobody else ever wanted you, did they, Matt?"

Matt's face flushed angrily, and he gave a quick sullen glance toward the little boy. But he did not answer. A month ago Arthur would not have escaped, after such a remark, without a volley of angry words from Matt, or a rough shaking, at the very best.

"Guess all the rest of us will have to go back," Arthur continued.

Andrew sprang to his feet, dropping his arrows, which fell in a sudden clatter on the bare floor. "I

won't go back, I won't!" he declared. "I can't stand it there any more."

The other boys looked at him in astonishment. For Andrew, quiet, serious Andrew, to rebel was a new experience. And he looked as if he was going to cry, too.

"Here comes Miss Pitts," said Matt warningly, and Andrew sat down just as suddenly as he had sprung up.

"Here are some warm doughnuts, boys!" announced Miss Pitts from the doorway. She brought the shining tin pan, filled with golden brown rings and twists, into the room and set it down beside Matt. "There," she said, "help yourselves; and if you get thirsty come right out and get a glass of milk. It's quite a long time before dinner, and I know healthy boys are always hungry."

Toward noon the dark clouds began to disappear, and when Mrs. Burton and Cathie reached Orchard House the rain had entirely ceased. The arrow-makers were still busy over their work.

"Are the bows and arrows ours?" Andrew asked Phinny, when Miss Pitts called them all in to their dinner.

"Sure!" Phinny answered. "You have a good bow

and three arrows; you can do just what you please with them."

"I guess I could make more arrows," Andrew responded thoughtfully.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A CHAPTER OF DISAPPOINTMENTS

“WHERE’S Andrew?” Cathie stood on the door-step of Orchard House. Miss Pitts was just coming down the stairs.

“He’s in the orchard shooting arrows at that mark Fred Dwight set up,” replied Miss Pitts. “Andrew’s been more quiet than ever these last few days. When he isn’t shooting at that mark he’s making arrows to shoot with.”

“He’s got to stop it,” Cathie declared so earnestly that Miss Pitts looked at the little girl in surprise.

“My land, Cathie! there ain’t a mite of harm in Andrew’s shooting at that mark. He don’t hit it very often, and Phinny wants the boys to have a real good time. You see there’s only one more week before they’ll be going back to the asylum.”

“Oh, dear!” and now Cathie’s voice sounded very mournful and discouraged.

“What is the matter, Cathie?” Miss Pitts demanded anxiously.

“Well, there’s only one more week to get five boys adopted, and nobody’s doing a single thing about it,” said Cathie.

“Well, you can’t expect me to do more’n I have,” responded Miss Pitts. “I’ve promised to do my best by Matthew.”

“You’ve been splendid, just splendid,” declared Cathie, “and if you can take a disagreeable, ugly boy like Matthew Warren to bring up, I should think other people might take nice, pleasant boys, like Andrew and Arthur.”

“Now, Cathie, there ain’t a thing disagreeable about Matthew, not a single thing. Maybe he was a little nervous when he first came, but that passed off; and I wouldn’t ask to have a more pleasant-minded boy than Matthew.”

Matt, who at that moment came around the corner of the house, heard Miss Pitts’ last statement, and smiled so radiantly that Miss Pitts and Cathie both smiled back at him.

“Well, he *looks* pleasant,” said Cathie with a little laugh, as she ran off toward the orchard.

Just beyond the big apple tree, where Cathie had hidden to watch the asylum boys at their first dinner, Fred Dwight had set up the mark for the archers, and



THE LITTLE BOY LOOKED AT HER EAGERLY



Nonny, Arthur and Andrew, with bows nearly as long as the boys were tall, with quivers woven of basket-stuff and filled with feather-tipped arrows, stood at the distance Fred had set for them, forty feet from the mark.

“Andrew!” Cathie called, and the little boy, rather reluctantly, came toward her. “Andrew, wouldn’t you like to live with Len Jones?” Cathie demanded earnestly.

“Of course I would! But what’s the use? His mother don’t want me,” Andrew answered, in a discouraged voice.

“I’ve found out why,” said Cathie, “and it’s something you can change, Andrew.”

The little boy looked at her eagerly, and Cathie nodded reassuringly. “Yes, Andrew, Mrs. Jones says that you are too quiet. Those were her very words. She said that if there was a boy around she liked to hear him.”

“I didn’t s’pose a boy could be *too* quiet,” responded Andrew thoughtfully. “I’ve always tried and tried to be just as quiet as I could, and the ’sylum folks always liked it.”

“Well, now you try being noisy,” said Cathie firmly; “perhaps it’s because Mrs. Jones is deaf, but, anyway,

she likes noisy boys. And you've none too much time," she continued; "there's just one week more for you to stay at Orchard House."

"What had I better do first?" asked Andrew, eagerly.

"You run right over to Mrs. Jones's now, and I guess you can find some way to be noisy," advised Cathie.

"I'll put my bow and arrows away first," said Andrew, starting toward the house.

Cathie sat down on the grass and watched Arthur and Nonny. "Phinny says Nonny is going to stay, that he'll adopt Nonny and pay his board if nobody wants to adopt him," she thought, "and who will take Arthur unless it is the Harpers; and I don't believe the Harpers have even thought about it. Oh, dear!" And Cathie almost wished that Phineas had postponed starting the vacation home for boys until after he had graduated from college.

"I know one thing," she resolved, "and that is, that when I have six girls here for a month next summer, I'm going to teach them a lot of useful things, so that everybody will want them."

Nonny came up and sat down beside the little girl. "I'm tired," he said. "When I was over

to Mr. Goddard's he used to read to me every day about this time," and he looked up at Cathie hopefully.

Cathie smiled, but shook her head. "I can't read to you, Nonny," she said; "I must go right home now and help Mother Burton."

Nonny watched Cathie until the orchard trees hid her from sight. Then with a little sigh of disappointment he stretched himself out on the grass, with his hands beneath his head, and lay looking up at the summer sky. Arthur came and sat down beside him, and for a few moments neither of the boys spoke. These two lads had been good friends at the asylum, and Nonny was the only one in whom Arthur ever confided.

"I hate to go back," said Arthur, "but I guess I don't hate it as much as Andrew does."

"Miss Gilman likes us," said Nonny, speaking of the kind-hearted matron of the asylum, who did her best to make her charges realize that she was always their friend.

"Andrew says he won't go back," went on Arthur. "He says if nobody wants him he's got a plan for himself."

"But you mustn't tell, Nonny."

“I won’t,” promised the lame boy, but without much interest in what Arthur was saying; for Nonny was thinking of the hammock under the trees in Mr. Goddard’s yard, and of the wonderful story Mr. Goddard had read to him about highland chiefs. Nonny knew that Phineas meant for him to stay somewhere in Skillings Village; but Nonny did not care much about it. Of course it would be splendid if he could stay with the friendly clergyman, who seemed to like to read to him, and always patted Nonny’s smooth brown head, but —

Nonny’s thoughts were interrupted by Arthur springing up suddenly with a joyful shout: “There’s Harry Harper!” and away Arthur ran, eager to reach the gate of Orchard House by the time Harry arrived there. But Nonny did not move.

“I guess I’d rather go back and stay at the asylum than have Phinny pay my board,” thought Nonny; for the asylum boys had all waked up to the fact that Phinny Burton worked very hard, and that he was generous to every one except Phinny Burton; and, since Nonny could not live with Mr. Goddard and his sister, the little lame boy was quite sure that he would rather return to Miss Gilman at the asylum; and when Phinny came down through the old apple orchard and

stopped to speak to Nonny the boy told him of his decision.

There was nothing Phineas could say, for he did not know just what arrangement he could make for Nonny. Phineas had hoped that Mr. Goddard would want Nonny to stay with him ; but now there was only one more week, and the clergyman had said nothing of the matter.

Phineas and Cathie were both rather more quiet than usual, and Mrs. Burton knew that it was because they were disappointed at the failure of their plans to secure homes for the boys.

“ I guess it’s going to be the making of Matt to have a real home,” said Mrs. Burton. “ He seems as good as a kitten these days. It’s worth all your trouble, Phineas, to have Matthew have such a good chance here in the village.”

“ Nonny wants to go back to the asylum,” responded Phineas soberly. “ And I don’t know what the matter is with Andrew Hill. When I came across the field to dinner I found him scrouched down by the fence crying as hard as he could cry ; and when I stopped to speak to him he kicked at me with both feet.”

“ Kicked at you !” exclaimed Mrs. Burton. “ Andrew

kicked!" and apparently could say nothing more. Cathie, with a half-smothered exclamation, had jumped up from the table, and ran out down the field. She was looking for Andrew.

"Go away; it's your fault. I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't told me she liked noisy boys," whimpered the boy, when Cathie, anxious and out of breath, discovered him close to the fence with his face hidden from view.

"Oh, Andrew! What did you do?" persisted Cathie, sitting down beside him, and feeling almost ready to cry herself.

"Made a noise. And Mrs. Jones told me to go straight back to Orchard House and stay there. Said she'd thought I was a nice quiet boy, but she guessed I'd been putting it on; and she was glad she had found me out in time." And Andrew sat up suddenly and faced Cathie. "I am a quiet boy!" he declared fiercely. "What did you tell me to go over there and make a noise for?"

For a moment Cathie stared at him in wondering silence. "She said she liked noisy boys," she replied quite soberly.

"Well, she don't, and I ought to have known that nobody likes boys, anyway, 'specially noisy boys," said

Andrew, getting slowly to his feet. "You needn't feel bad," he added, relentingly. "I guess you didn't know any better," and Andrew started off toward Orchard House, leaving Cathie wondering what dreadful thing Andrew had done.

It had been nothing very alarming. He had hammered loudly on Mrs. Jones's kitchen door. Then he had stamped his feet up and down on the floor, and, wishing to prove that he could furnish any amount of noise, had kicked the shining milk tins from the edge of the piazza.

"I don't know as I want any more asylum children to come to Orchard House," thought Cathie, as she walked slowly toward home.

"Don't say a word to Andrew ; don't blame him, I mean," she said to Phinny. "I'm the one to blame. I always am. I told Andrew to do something, and of course it turned out to be just the wrong thing for him to do."

Cathie did not explain what she had told Andrew to do, and Phineas did not question her. He was feeling a little discouraged himself.

"I guess the Parkers are going to keep the twins, anyway," he said, thinking this possibility might encourage Cathie.

“Oh, Phinny!” and Cathie’s voice sounded as if a new trouble was close at hand. “Didn’t you know? Mr. Washington Parker brought the twins back about an hour ago.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### A WONDERLAND PARTY

“MOTHER BURTON, Miss Pitts says that Harry Harper has invited us all over to the Harper farm tomorrow afternoon,” said Cathie on her return from her usual morning visit to Orchard House. “You and I are ’specially invited.”

“I wouldn’t miss it for anything,” responded Mrs. Burton. “I don’t know of any nicer place to have a good time than at Harper farm. Miss Pitts means to go, doesn’t she?”

“Yes, but she’s real worried this morning about one of those gray blankets that Miss Goddard loaned her. One of them has disappeared; she can’t find it anywhere,” replied Cathie.

“I guess it can’t be far away,” said Mrs. Burton.

“And the Watson twins are in the dumps,” continued Cathie. “It seems they thought that Mr. Parker and his sister meant to adopt them; and I suppose I’m to blame for their thinking so, just as I am for starting Andrew over to Mrs. Jones.” Cathie looked very

sober. Not even the prospect of a visit with Helen and Margaret Harper had lightened her spirits.

“Cath-ie, Cather-ine!” sounded a familiar voice, and Helen Harper came running up the porch steps.

“Mrs. Burton, can’t Cathie go home with me now? I want her to help us get ready for the party to-morrow,” said Helen, perching herself on the arm of the wooden rocking-chair in which Mrs. Burton was sitting.

“It’s going to be an ‘Alice in Wonderland’ party. We’re going to have the Cheshire Cat, the White Rabbit, and the Frog Footman, and a lot more.”

“Oh, Helen,” exclaimed Cathie admiringly, “how did you think of such a splendid plan?”

“I’m always thinking of splendid things, but I don’t often have a chance to carry out my thoughts,” rejoined Helen laughingly.

“I’m sure it will be a real nice party, but the Orchard House boys don’t know anything more about Cheshire Cats and Frog Footmen than they know about angels, nor as much,” said Mrs. Burton.

“Arthur Joyce does,” replied Helen. “I read the book to him when he was at our house; and mother said I was to bring Arthur home. We want him for the White Rabbit. Margaret and Harry are making

pasteboard heads for the Dormouse, and all the rest of the characters."

"I read part of the story to Nonny Sykes, so he knows," said Cathie; "it will be fun. Can I go back with Helen, Mother Burton?"

"Just as well as not," responded Mrs. Burton. "Miss Pitts and I will ride over with Phinny, and Len can take the boys over in the hay wagon."

Helen ran over to Orchard House to tell Miss Pitts of the plans for the next day, and to tell Arthur that he was to be ready to return with her to Harper farm. But Arthur had gone off with Andrew for a tramp through the woods, so Helen and Cathie had to start without him.

"Tell the boys to bring their bows and arrows," Helen said as she bade Miss Pitts good-bye. "Roy has a prize for the boy who makes the best score."

"Andrew will get the prize," said Matt, as he and Miss Pitts stood at the gate watching Helen and Cathie drive off. "He's always practicing," continued Matt, "and yesterday he hit the bull's-eye seven times out of ten. None of the other boys do as well."

"I guess it's because they don't try," responded Miss Pitts. "It's too bad you've missed the chance of so

many good times on account of that tumble, Matthew," she added kindly.

Matt looked up at her in surprise.

"Me?" he exclaimed. "Why, Miss Pitts, I ain't missed anything. Gee! I never had so good a time in my life. And just think how lucky I am. I'm going to be your boy, and all the rest of the fellers have to go back to the asylum. I don't care anything about shooting at a mark, and I had the fun of making the arrows, anyway."

Miss Pitts nodded approvingly. "So you did, Matthew. Well, I must try and hunt up my butcher-knife. I can't see where I put it," she said, turning back to the house.

"Guess it's keeping company with Phinny's hatchet," suggested Matt laughingly, following her into the kitchen. "I heard Phinny say he couldn't find his hatchet."

"I've been thinking, Matthew," said Miss Pitts, opening the drawer of the kitchen table in a vain search for the missing knife, "that I'd be real pleased if you felt like calling me 'Aunt Eliza.'"

"Yes'm," responded Matt. "I'd be real proud to," he added.

"Well, then, that's all settled. But maybe you'd

better not begin until the other boys are gone," she said.

"All right," agreed Matt. "I guess they would feel a little left out," he added slowly. "Say, Miss Pitts, I wisht Nonny didn't have to go back."

"I wish so, too, Matthew," responded Miss Pitts with a little sigh.

Andrew and Arthur did not return in time for the midday meal, and it was late in the afternoon when Phinny saw the two little boys coming slowly across the pasture.

"Had a good time, boys?" Phinny asked, as he went to meet them. "You look tired."

"I'm tired to death," grumbled Arthur, "but Andrew teased me to go."

Andrew did not speak. He looked more serious than ever, and offered no explanation for their long absence from Orchard House.

When Miss Pitts told the boys that night of the invitation to visit Harper farm, she added, turning to Arthur, "And Helen was real disappointed not to take you home with her, Arthur. Harry sent word for you to come."

"There!" exclaimed Arthur in an angry voice, turning toward Andrew. "Now you see what I've missed

by going off with you to your silly woods; I guess you can be all the Indian boys you want to. I ——” and Arthur stopped as suddenly as he had begun.

Andrew did not even look up from his plate, and no one gave any special attention to what Arthur said except Matt, who asked:

“Been playing Indian? Made believe you were those two boys who killed rabbits with their bows and arrows?”

“We didn’t kill any rabbits,” Arthur grumbled in a surly voice. He was very tired, and bitterly disappointed at having missed a chance to go to Harper farm.

“I expect that you’ll all have a splendid time tomorrow,” said Miss Pitts, “and after supper you boys can look at a book Helen Harper left here for you to read.”

“It’s a girl’s book!” announced Chester Watson. “It says, ‘Adventures of Alice in Wonderland.’”

“Yes,” agreed Miss Pitts, “but as I recall the story I don’t believe that any boy ever had so many remarkable things happen to him as happen in that book.”

The next day found the boys eager for the time to arrive for them to start for the Harpers’. All but Andrew, who had disappeared directly after breakfast.

“He’s off in the woods again,” said Arthur, a little scornfully.

“Well, I hope he’ll be back in good season. We plan to start right after dinner. Have any of you boys seen my pint dipper?” she added. But the boys declared they had not.

Dinner time came, but Andrew did not appear, and when Phinny drove off with Mother Burton and Miss Pitts he had not returned.

“I’ll wait half an hour,” said Len good-naturedly.

“You have Andrew eat his dinner, Leander. I’ve covered it up on one end of the table,” Miss Pitts said.

The other boys were uneasy and anxious to start, and at the end of the half hour Len drove off without Andrew.

“Too bad,” Len said, “for the little fellow to miss the good time at the Harpers’; but it’s not fair to you chaps to wait any longer.”

“We’ve waited too long now,” grumbled Arthur.

As the hay wagon with its expectant load of eager-faced boys turned into the lane leading to the Harper farm, Nonny waved both arms and exclaimed in an excited voice: “Look, fellers! Look! There they come!”

There was a chorus of exclamations from the other boys as they saw a little procession coming down the lane.

The first figure carried a long tin horn in one hand and a roll of paper in the other. It wore a huge paper ruff around its neck, and a big loose coat of bright green cotton marked off in white squares, like a checkerboard.

"It's the White Rabbit! See its ears!" said Nonny.

"And that's Humpty Dumpty," declared Arthur, as a queer figure left the procession and perched itself on the stone wall, from which it tumbled, and lay on the soft grass, making no effort to arise.

"The last one is the Frog Footman," said Nonny. "See, he's going to lead Old Whitey."

"That's Harry Harper, all right," laughed Len.

Cathie, wearing a big pasteboard mask, was the Cheshire Cat, and the Harpers had costumes all ready for their guests. The costumes were made of sheets of heavy cardboard tied over the shoulders with colored ribbons, and made to represent the Mad Hatter, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and a number of others.

The big carriage house had been cleared, and the

Frog Footman led the guests in and introduced them to Mrs. Harper, Mrs. Burton and Miss Pitts.

“It looks just as if they were right out of the book,” declared Mrs. Burton, as the Frog Footman led the White Rabbit toward her.

“All join hands,” he called, when all the party had been introduced, and as he spoke, there came the first gay strains of music from behind a screen of woven pine boughs at one end of the carriage house.

“That’s Roy’s flute!” exclaimed Arthur; “and it’s Mr. Harper playing the violin, I’ll bet.”

Round and round swung the circle from “Wonderland” until the music stopped. Then they were all glad to take off the pasteboard masks and costumes and follow Mrs. Harper to the piazza and enjoy the ice-cream and cakes. And such cakes! For every cake was in the shape of a Wonderland figure, with pink frosting for the Cheshire Cat, and pink frosting for Humpty Dumpty, whom the Mad Hatter had helped to raise himself up again.

While they were all enjoying themselves Andrew was running through the woods and pastures hoping to reach Orchard House in time to start with the others. He had no way of knowing the time, and Len had been gone an hour before Andrew climbed

the pasture fence and, looking toward the house, realized that he was too late.

“I don’t care,” he said aloud, as he pushed open the kitchen door just as the clock struck two. Andrew saw that Miss Pitts had left his dinner on the table. He was very hungry, and was soon eating the cold beef stew, the fresh gingerbread and apple tart.

“I don’t care,” he repeated, as he carried the dishes to the sink, and brushed the crumbs from the table. After he had put the room in order he went out-of-doors and sat down on the door-step. He was too tired to go down in the orchard and shoot at the mark, or to do anything except sit quietly. He rested his head against the house, and closed his eyes. He was too tired even to wonder what the others were doing.

Mrs. Jones, coming across the fields, saw the little figure on the door-step of Orchard House.

“I declare!” she said to herself as she drew nearer and discovered that it was Andrew. “I wonder why Andrew didn’t go with the others? How tired he looks!”

Mrs. Jones approached him very softly and sat down beside the sleeping boy. Very gently she slipped her arm between the boy’s head and the gray clapboards. “He makes me think of Lennie when he was

this age," she thought. "Poor little boy, with no mother."

Andrew slept peacefully on, and Mrs. Jones sat beside him, the boy's head resting comfortably on her arm.

## CHAPTER XV

### ABOUT ANDREW

ANDREW awoke with a start, and, for a moment, did not realize that he was really awake. It could not be real, he thought, that his head was resting against Mrs. Jones's shoulder, and that she should be looking down at him with such a friendly smile.

"You've had a real good nap," Mrs. Jones said kindly, "but why didn't you go with the others to Harper farm?"

Andrew sat up very straight and brushed back the hair from his forehead. "I went off to the woods and didn't get home in time," he answered, speaking each word very clearly.

"Well, now, if that ain't too bad. From what Len told me I should say you were missing a real good time. What started you off to the woods, anyway, Andrew?"

Andrew looked away from the kind face, and made no answer. He was thinking to himself that if it had not been for Cathie Burton telling him that Mrs. Jones liked noisy boys that perhaps Mrs. Jones

might have wanted him to stay at her house, and then ——

“I didn’t hear what you said, Andrew,” said Mrs. Jones.

“I’m sorry I made all that noise over to your house,” declared Andrew suddenly.

Mrs. Jones smiled. “Well, ’twas a surprise to me, sure enough,” she responded, “but Len was always rather noisy, so I ought to have known that boys are all more or less so. I’ll have to be stepping home now, and you’d better come over and stay with me till your folks get back.”

As they walked across the fields together Andrew was wishing that he dared tell Mrs. Jones that he really was a quiet boy. There was something else he would have liked to tell her, but that something else he could never tell to any one, he thought. Arthur knew this secret of Andrew’s, but he was sure that Arthur would not tell.

“You are like my Leander in one way,” said Mrs. Jones, as they reached her house. “You like to be off in the woods. I don’t suppose that any one knows the woods and streams in this township as well as my Len. I expect if you should get lost in any of your tramps Len would know just where to find you.”

Andrew looked up with startled eyes. "How would he know?" he asked.

"I can't answer that, I'm sure," responded Mrs. Jones pleasantly; "but don't you take any chances about getting lost on account of my saying that Len could find you, for just as likely as not he couldn't. Now I shouldn't wonder if the Harpers were giving those other boys something real good to eat—ice-cream and cake, for all that we know. So you and I will see what we can have. You come right in to the sitting-room, Andrew, and I'll see what I can find to eat."

Andrew seated himself on the edge of the wide sofa and looked about him. There was a big table in the center of the room holding a lamp with a green shade; there were books and papers on the table. On the painted floor were large braided rugs, and there was a fireplace with a high mantel. As Andrew looked about the plain room with its comfortable chairs and pleasant outlook over broad fields toward the distant woods, he gave a little sigh. "I guess Indian boys are different. I guess they like living in a brush house in the woods," he whispered to himself.

In a few moments Mrs. Jones returned with a white covered tray holding a pretty glass dish of blanc

mange, a tiny bowl of powdered sugar and a pink and white pitcher filled with cream. On the pink plate were several round cakes with white frosting.

"Pound cake and blanc mange isn't ice-cream," she said, setting the tray on Andrew's knees, "but I guess it will taste pretty good."

"Yes'm!" Andrew agreed promptly. Until the last crumb of cake had disappeared Andrew did not speak. Then, as Mrs. Jones took the tray, he looked up at her gratefully. "Thank you. You're real good," he said.

"Len tells me you can shoot an arrow straighter than any of the other boys, and that you can make splendid arrows, too," she said kindly, wishing to praise the little boy who sat so quietly on her black haircloth-covered sofa.

The little smile faded from Andrew's face, and he made no response. He wished that Mrs. Jones would not talk so much about the woods, and about making arrows. It made him feel as if she knew what he intended to do. For Andrew had made a very serious resolve.

He had determined never to return to the Boston asylum, but to build a brush house in the woods and live in it. He had found the place for his wigwam. It was several miles from Orchard House, not

far from Long Pond, in a thickly-growing grove of pines. He had tried to persuade Arthur to join him, but Arthur, after looking at the dark woods and lonely lake, had declared that he thought the asylum was a real nice place to live, and all Andrew's statements as to the delights of killing foxes, rabbits, maybe wolves and bears, could not persuade him. "You'll freeze, and I guess you'll be hungry most of the time," Arthur had said, but he had promised to keep Andrew's secret, and had worked strenuously cutting boughs of spruce for Andrew's shelter.

It was nearly dusk when Len drove up to Orchard House with his load of tired, happy boys. Phinny, driving Splendid, had reached home a little earlier, bringing Cathie back with Mother Burton and Miss Pitts.

Mrs. Jones and Andrew came into the yard just as Phinny drove up, and Mrs. Jones hastened to explain how Andrew had happened to be late in getting back to Orchard House. "He's a sight like Len; likes to wander off in the woods," she said.

Cathie's face brightened as she saw the kind look with which Mrs. Jones regarded Andrew. "I'm going to tell her that I told him to be as noisy as he could," resolved Cathie.



“YOU SAID YOU LIKED NOISY BOYS”



Mrs. Jones listened in surprise to Cathie's confession. Cathie had followed her to the gate and no one was near them.

"You said you liked noisy boys," Cathie reminded her, "and Andrew wanted you to like him."

"I do like him," responded Mrs. Jones, "but I was considerable put out when he knocked all those milk tins off the piazza. I had to wash every single one of 'em. I declare," she added, with a little smile, "I'm real pleased to know that Andrew don't go banging around like he did that day."

Cathie did not dare to suggest again that Andrew would be just the boy to live with the Jones family, but she resolved to ask Len to persuade his mother and father to take Andrew.

Arthur and Nonny told Andrew of all that he had missed in not going to the Harpers'.

"I'm glad I didn't go," Andrew declared stubbornly. "I had a real good time here."

Andrew's plans were now made. He had carried off the blanket that Miss Pitts had so promptly missed, the knife, the tin dipper and Phinny's sharp hatchet. It had occurred to Andrew that he had no right to take these things, but he said to himself that he would pick berries, sell them at the village, and leave the money at

Orchard House when he went away. So his last excursions had been to gather raspberries, which he had carried to the village and sold. He had earned a dollar, and that seemed a large sum to the little boy who had never had any money of his own. He was quite sure that it was a liberal return for the things he had carried off and hidden in the woods.

“I guess I’ll go to-morrow,” Andrew confided to Arthur the night after the Harper party; “it’s only a week more before Phinny is to take us back to Boston, and my brush house isn’t finished. I’ve saved a piece of bread, or something, from every meal this week. I’ve got it all tied up in a paper out in the orchard,” he said.

“I guess it won’t taste very good,” said Arthur, renewing his promise never under any circumstances to betray Andrew’s whereabouts.

“I’ll just walk off to-morrow morning with my bow and arrows,” said Andrew, “just like I’ve been doing, and they won’t think about me till night.”

When Andrew finished his breakfast the next morning he did not offer to help wash the dishes or make the beds. Miss Pitts wondered at his sudden disappearance, but it was a busy morning and she gave no special thought to Andrew until late that afternoon.

Fred Dwight had been giving a good deal of time to his air-ship, and this morning he had told the boys that they could all come up in the barn loft and have a look at it.

“I’m going to try it to-morrow,” Fred declared; for he was convinced that he had made a flying-machine that would carry him through the air. The boys were all too much interested in looking over this wonderful craft to give much thought to the fact that Andrew was not there.

“If it wasn’t for your arm I’d let you try it, Matt,” declared Fred generously.

“Not much, Fred,” said Phinny laughingly. “Matt will have to be satisfied with tumbling out of the barn loft. Miss Pitts doesn’t want him to break all his bones.”

Matt did not say anything, but he resolved that another summer he would certainly wish to have a try at flying.

While the boys were all interested and excited over the air-ship, Andrew was trudging off across the pastures. The package of bits of bread, gingerbread and cookies was rolled in his jacket, and he had his bow and arrows. At the further end of the pasture, where the woods began, he had concealed the blanket,

hatchet, the knife and the tin dipper. These things made a clumsy burden, and Andrew could not carry them very easily. The day was warm and there was but little air stirring, and he made slow progress through the woods. He was sure that he could find the way easily, as he had made several trips to Long Pond.

Although Andrew had made an early start it was midday before he saw the cool glimmer of the waters of the lake. He carried his things to the pile of brush that he and Arthur had cut for a wigwam, and put them down with a long breath of relief, and threw himself on the ground beside them.

“I’m glad I’ve got something to eat and don’t have to catch fish or rabbits right off,” he thought, unwrapping his package of food. But the dried and crumbling ginger-bread, and the hard bits of bread did not taste very good to him; neither did the drink of water from the lake. Andrew could not help but think of the good dinner he would have had at Orchard House.

“I’ll have good things here,” he resolved valiantly. “I’ll catch fish, and ——” Andrew stopped suddenly, realizing for the first time that he had no way of making a fire. He wondered how the Indian boys had

roasted the rabbits that they had killed with their bows and arrows.

After he had rested he decided that he must begin on the brush house. But he was puzzled again. He had not the faintest idea of the way in which a comfortable shelter could be made of brush ; but he found several small trees growing closely together, and decided that he could stand up the brush he had cut beside the trees, weaving it in with the branches to make a wall that would turn water.

It was not easy work, and Andrew could not seem to make the brush stay where it was put, but he kept on trying, and when the sun disappeared behind the tall pines Andrew had managed to make a brush wall as high as his own head, between two of the little trees whose branches grew closely together. It seemed to have a good many holes in it.

“It will be all right when I get it done,” thought the tired boy, spreading the gray blanket on the rough ground. It was too dusky to search for berries, and Andrew said to himself that he was not very hungry anyway ; just thirsty. So he dipped his tin dish into the lake and drank, then rolled himself up in the gray blanket, and lay looking up through the branches of the little spruce trees at the summer sky, watching the

evening stars come glimmering out, and wondering if Len Jones was having pound cake for supper, and what the boys were all doing. But Andrew was very tired, and was soon asleep.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MRS. JONES DECIDES

“IT beats all how Andrew likes to go off in the woods,” said Miss Pitts, as the boys gathered around the dinner table at Orchard House and Andrew did not appear.

But she was not very anxious about him, for it was no unusual thing for Andrew to start off in the morning and not return until late in the afternoon. And when supper time came and he was still missing, Matt said laughingly that he guessed Andrew had decided to live in the woods; and Miss Pitts replied that Andrew and Len Jones both liked woods better than houses. She expected every moment to see a tired little boy come tramping across the fields, hungry for his supper. But when the shadows of evening began to fall and Andrew did not appear Miss Pitts told Arthur Joyce to run over to Mrs. Burton's and tell Phinny.

Arthur did not hurry on the errand. He knew what Andrew's plans were, and Arthur was afraid Phineas might question him. He gave Phinny Miss Pitts'

message: "Miss Pitts says to tell you that Andrew went off this morning and hasn't come home."

"Where did he go?" Phinny asked.

"Miss Pitts says she s'poses he's gone off in the woods," replied Andrew, digging his bare toes into the soft earth at the edge of the pathway where he had met Phinny.

"And it's nearly dark! I don't believe he'd go far enough to get lost, but he may have had a tumble and hurt himself," said Phinny anxiously. "Run over and tell Len Jones, will you, Arthur? And I'll go to Orchard House."

Arthur went off with this second message even more doubtfully. He wished that Andrew had never heard of bows and arrows, or of Indian boys living in the woods. "Len Jones will find him. Len can find anything in the woods," Arthur thought; "and if they find out that I knew all the time and didn't tell where Andrew was, they'll all blame me. And I can't tell. I promised not to," and Arthur began to feel troubled and unhappy.

Len listened to what Arthur told him and repeated the message to Mrs. Jones.

"You start right off, Lennie. It's getting darker every minute," she said anxiously. "You'll need a

lantern. Oh, dear!" and Mrs. Jones's voice sounded as if she was very anxious; "that poor little quiet boy. Len!" and Mrs. Jones put her hand on the arm of her tall son. "I've made my mind up! I'm going to have Andrew come here and live! Yes, I am. I ought to have decided before. You tell him the minute you find him."

"All right, mother," Len promised. Arthur did not hear this conversation, for as soon as he had given Phinny's message to Len Arthur had started back for Orchard House. Len was close behind him. It was now nearly nine o'clock. There was no moon, but the summer skies were bright with stars.

"Thought I'd bring my 'palouser' along," explained Len, when he saw the boys at Orchard House looking curiously at what appeared to be an old lard pail he was carrying.

"What's a 'palouser'?" Matt questioned.

"I'll show you how to make one some time. First-rate lantern for the woods," Len explained hurriedly, for Phinny was ready to start.

"Arthur's been off with Andrew on some of his tramps; perhaps he would know which way Andrew generally goes," suggested Phinny, but Arthur had suddenly disappeared. He had feared this very

question, and was now lurking behind a tree in the orchard.

Len was busy fitting a candle into the old lard pail. Matt noticed that the iron bail had been changed so that it was now hooked over one side of the pail. Below the bail, some two inches, an X-shaped opening had been cut, near the center, and the points turned inward.

These points, inward-bent, made an excellent holder for the candle. There was a small opening directly under the handle for a ventilator.

"I could make one of those without much showing," Matt declared, as Len lighted the candle. The inside of the tin pail acted as a reflector, and the "palouser" sent broad rays of light in whichever direction it was pointed.

"You can make a pretty good one with an old tin can, or a roll of birch bark, if you have a candle," said Len. "We'll find Andrew; don't worry," and he and Phinny started off toward the woods. Mr. Jones, with another "palouser" and a good supply of candles, had also gone in search of Andrew, telling Miss Pitts that if none of the searchers were back at Orchard House by midnight she would better send word over to Mr. Goddard.

It was not quite twelve when Mr. Jones returned. He had not found Andrew. Two hours later Phinny and Len, tired and anxious, came back to Orchard House, but with no news of the missing boy. They had gone to all the places that seemed likely.

“You and Phinny must go to bed,” said Mr. Jones. “We are all too tired to do anything more to-night. Andrew is no doubt comfortably asleep in the woods, and will appear with a good appetite for his breakfast.”

There seemed that nothing could be done but wait for morning, but there was very little sleep at Orchard House that night.

“I keep thinking about that bear Phineas killed the first summer he was here,” Miss Pitts had said just as Arthur Joyce went up-stairs. Arthur heard her, and now he lay frightened and sleepless, quite sure that Andrew was in danger of being devoured by some wandering bear.

But now the more Arthur thought about it the more certain he became that if any harm happened to Andrew it would be his fault if he did not tell where Andrew was. “I guess Andrew would rather live all his life in an asylum rather than have a bear eat him,” Arthur thought. Then he remembered his solemn

promise to Andrew never to tell of the plan to live in the woods, and Arthur became more and more unhappy.

Mrs. Jones was over at Orchard House at an early hour the next morning, hoping that Andrew was back safe and well.

“I mean to have Andrew stay with us,” she told Miss Pitts, “and I do wish I had made up my mind before this; then, like as not, Andrew would have felt more settled in his mind, and would not have gone wandering off in the woods. If anything should happen to him I’d never forgive myself for letting him go.”

“How did you happen to think about Andrew?” questioned Miss Pitts.

“Cathie!” replied Mrs. Jones briefly; “she’s tried every way to show me that it was real lucky that a boy like Andrew could be adopted; and if I hadn’t been so selfish I would have decided before this. I——”

But here Mrs. Jones was interrupted by having her arm suddenly grasped and by Arthur Joyce exclaiming:

“I heard you! I heard you! You mean you want to adopt Andrew?”

“My soul, Arthur!” exclaimed Miss Pitts in sur-

prise. "You've frightened Mrs. Jones half out of her wits. What do you mean?"

But Arthur did not release his grasp on Mrs. Jones's arm. He was looking up eagerly into that good lady's face.

"Do you want Andrew to live with you?" he repeated.

"I do," answered Mrs. Jones.

"I know where he is. I'll tell now. Andrew likes you," and Arthur nodded at Mrs. Jones approvingly, "but he said if nobody wanted him he'd go off and live in the woods and take care of himself, shoot things with bows and arrows, and catch fish like Indians do."

"Arthur," and Miss Pitts' voice was very stern, "do you mean to say you have known where Andrew was all this time?"

"Yes'm. But I couldn't tell, because I promised not to tell. And I wouldn't now if Mrs. Jones hadn't promised to adopt him. You do promise, don't you? Because I won't tell now if you don't," declared Arthur, turning again toward Mrs. Jones.

"You hear what I said, Arthur," replied Mrs. Jones, "and I've half a mind to take you, too," she added. "Now you tell us just where Andrew is, and then you

go with Leander and Phinny and show them the place.”

Andrew had had a most uncomfortable night. It seemed to him that the ground where he lay was nothing but hard roots and bumps of earth.

And very much to his disappointment the gray blanket had not kept him warm. Andrew woke up hungry, cold and unhappy. For the first time he began to wonder if Miss Pitts would not worry about him, and to remember the kind matron back at the asylum.

In the night he had heard the lonely cry of herons, far up the lake, and strange rustlings of wild things moving about in the woods; and he had recalled the story of the bear that Phineas Burton had shot in the blueberry pasture.

So as Andrew sat up, with the old gray blanket drawn closely about him, and wondered what he could find in the woods to satisfy his hunger, he was very much troubled.

Just then he heard a sudden rushing sound through the woods as if a big animal had scented its prey and was springing toward it. “It’s a bear! It’s a bear!” the little boy screamed aloud, just as Mike, Phinny Burton’s big collie, came leaping out of the

woods and sprang toward the little figure huddled up in the gray blanket.

"Oh, Mike! I'm glad it's you," Andrew whimpered, throwing his arms around the silky neck of the big collie.

For a few moments Mike stood quite still, his tail wagging, his mouth open, as if smiling down on this foolish little boy; then he jumped away, barked loudly and dashed back into the woods, and a moment later Len and Phinny appeared.

When Arthur Joyce had described the place where Andrew meant to build a brush house Len had said that he knew the very spot, and Arthur was glad to stay at Orchard House instead of going with the older boys to bring Andrew home.

"Glad to see us, I'll wager," declared Len, as he held out his hand toward Andrew. "Phinny, just start up a fire down by the pond, and we'll roast these potatoes I brought along," and Len threw down a bag. "Here's a towel and some soap, Andrew," he added, handing them to the boy. "Run down to the lake and take a dip while we get breakfast ready."

Andrew obeyed.

He said to himself that the appearance of Len and Phinny meant that he would return to the asylum;

and Andrew was not sorry. He remembered that there were pleasant things at the asylum after all: good beds to sleep on, plenty to eat, and other boys to play with.

By the time he had finished his dip in the clear waters of the lake, rubbed himself vigorously, and dressed, Len was calling him to breakfast. "I'm awful hungry," Andrew said, when Phinny handed him a tin dipper filled with hot coffee, and a big slice of well-buttered bread.

"The potatoes will be ready in a minute," Phinny responded. Neither of the older boys had scolded Andrew, or asked him any questions, which he thought was very kind of them.

Phineas had run away from the asylum when he was about Andrew's age, and he knew just what had been in the little boy's heart. It was boys like Andrew that Phineas was planning to help.

"Some day you and I'll come up here and camp out, Andrew," Len said, as he drew a roasted potato from the hot ashes with the aid of a sharp-pointed stick he had cut.

"It's great fun to come up here in winter and fish through the ice for frost-fish."

Andrew did not answer, and Len went on: "You

see, Andrew, my mother wants you to come and live with us; so you and I can have a lot of good times, you know."

Andrew dropped his tin dipper with a sudden clatter, but apparently neither Len nor Phinny noticed the boy's surprise.

"You'll have to do chores," Len warned him. But still Andrew did not speak. "And go to school, too," Len continued in a firm voice.

Andrew heard him, but Andrew's thoughts had traveled off to that pleasant sitting-room with its painted floor and braided rugs. He could see the big round table, and the lamp and the haircloth sofa. And he could see Mrs. Jones's kind face smiling at him.

"When do I go to live at your house?" Andrew asked soberly.

"To-day. The very minute we get back," Len answered.

"Let's start now," said Andrew, jumping up from the ground.

On the way back Andrew told Phinny that he had left a dollar, wrapped up in a piece of paper, under the pillow of his bed at Orchard House to pay for the blanket, the dipper, knife and hatchet which he was now carrying back.

“Well,” said Phinny, “you are returning all the things you borrowed, Andrew, so I guess you can get that dollar and keep it. You earned it, you know.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### ORCHARD HOUSE FLIER

“WELL, Andrew, I guess you and Len will get on famously ; you both like the woods,” said Mr. Jones, when Andrew followed Len into the Jones sitting-room.

Arthur Joyce and Miss Pitts had brought Andrew's few possessions over to the Jones house that morning, and Andrew now had a room of his own. It was a pleasant square room very much like Len's, and when Mrs. Jones told Andrew that it was to be his very own, he had hardly known what to say.

No one had blamed or scolded Andrew for his woodland experiment, but when Mrs. Jones said : “Your going off the way you did, Andrew, made me feel real ashamed,” the little boy began to realize that he had made his best friends anxious and unhappy, and he firmly resolved to himself that he would never make Mrs. Jones anxious again.

“You can take my job of keeping the kitchen wood-box filled, Andy,” Len promptly announced. “I'll be going to college this fall, so you have come just at the right time.”

“ Andrew’s going to be a sight of company for me, I can see that,” Mrs. Jones declared, and Andrew looked at his good friend gratefully, quite sure that he was the most fortunate boy in the world.

“ Isn’t it splendid, Phinny, that Andrew Hill is to live with Mrs. Jones !” said Cathie, as she and Mother Burton listened to Phinny’s story of Mrs. Jones’s decision ; “ but I do wish Nonny had a truly home,”

“ So do I,” responded Phinny, “ but the little fellow says that unless he can be adopted he’d rather go back to the asylum.”

“ And there’s Mr. Goddard with that great big house ! I do think ——” but Cathie did not finish, for Mrs. Burton put up a warning finger ; and just then there came a smart rap at the door.

“ It’s Fred Dwight !” exclaimed Phineas jumping up from the table. “ He’s going to try his flying-machine to-day,” and Phinny ran out to join Fred, who was on his way to Orchard House.

The boys were all out in front of the barn waiting for Fred, and followed him up the ladder into the barn loft where Fred’s air-ship was awaiting its first trial. The previous spring the boys of the village school had formed an air-ship club, and a number of very good models had been the result. Fred Dwight had been

more interested in the subject than any of the other boys, and had procured books describing the different types of "fliers," with directions how to make them. Phinny had loaned him the barn loft for a workshop, and now the wonderful machine was finished; and the day had come when it was to be lowered from the loft, and carried to the rough stand the boys had erected on the pasture hill. From this stand Fred was to make his first flight. No one but the boys of Orchard House, Len and Phinny were to see the attempt; but if it proved successful Fred had resolved to surprise the village by flying over it, and landing, if possible, near his father's house.

Fred had modeled his machine after the Santos Dumont monoplane. It was about twenty feet long, and its total width over the planes was eighteen feet; its height seven feet.

Fred had used bent pieces of ash, like a sleigh runner, to hold the framework, and the two spars that were the main support of the planes were also of ash. He had sent away for the oiled silk which covered the spars.

The area of his main plane was over one hundred square feet, and that of the tail-piece about fifty square feet. The seat, unlike most flying-machines, was

below the motor. It had taken all Fred's earnings to purchase the silk and the small second-hand aeroplane motor which he had secured through an advertisement in the county paper, but he had completed a very skilful and finished piece of work. It was lowered from the open side of the loft of the old barn. And the boys were very careful in carrying the different parts to the pasture hill, where Fred, with Phinny's assistance, put it together, and the "Orchard House Flier," as he had named it, was ready for its trial.

Fred had his air-ship poised, his motor started, and was in his seat. The little group of boys stood silent and expectant. If Fred should really fly they felt it would be the most wonderful thing in the world. The little craft raised itself from the platform, hung wavering for a few seconds, then rushed upward. Then something happened. There was a sound like the explosion of a small bomb, and down came the winged flier not fifty feet from the platform. Len and Phinny rushed toward it, half afraid that they might find Fred badly hurt. He had been flung from the seat, and fell some distance beyond his machine, which lay grumbling and swaying in a broken heap.

"It was that old motor," declared Fred, as he scrambled to his feet. His shirt-sleeve hung, torn in

strips, from one shoulder, and his hands and face were bruised; but Fred did not seem to notice this. He looked ruefully at his broken machine.

“Might have known what a second-hand motor would do; but just wait until I earn money enough for a new motor, and all you fellows will see me fly,” he said.

“I believe we shall, Fred,” responded Phinny, “and I don’t think this machine is hurt much.” While Phineas, Len and Fred looked over the broken flying-machine, the younger boys wandered down the pasture toward the brook. In a few days it would be the first of September, and as the time set for the boys’ return to the asylum drew near they had all begun to feel rather sober.

Nonny Sykes kept very close to Matt as they walked down the slope.

“You’ll be making flying-machines, won’t you, Matt?” Nonny questioned. “Miss Pitts has a fine shed to work in.”

“I ain’t so sure that I’m going to stay with Miss Pitts,” announced Matthew.

Nonny stopped short, and looked at his companion in amazement.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Guess I don’t want to stay in the country,” said Matt. “You see, Nonny, I think if I go back to the city maybe I can get a chance to live in a bigger place than this.”

“Don’t you like Miss Pitts?” questioned Nonny.

Matthew did not answer. He was thinking to himself that he liked Miss Pitts better than anybody in all the world; then he looked down at Nonny’s thin little face and twisted foot, and his unselfish resolve grew stronger: the resolve to give Nonny his chance for a home.

“You see, Nonny, I’m ’most grown up. I’m past twelve,” went on Matt, “and I guess Miss Pitts would like a younger boy better; some little fellow who would like to sit in the house and be good company for her.”

“Do you s’pose she would?” asked Nonny.

“Sure!” declared Matt. “You see, she never gave me a thought until I broke my arm. I guess she thought I’d be quiet and stay in; but you see I’m almost all right again. She used to like Andrew because he was quiet.”

“She can’t have Andrew now; he’s going to live at the Jones’s,” Nonny reminded him.

“So he is!” responded Matt, as if he had forgotten

all about that. "Well, Nonny, I believe Miss Pitts likes you real well; and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if, when she finds out that I'm going back to the asylum, she asks you to stay and be her boy."

Nonny's thin little hand clutched at the sleeve of Matt's blouse. "Honest, Matt?" he asked. "I'd like to stay. She's pretty nearly the nicest lady I ever met. It would be fine."

"Of course it would," Matt declared bravely. "You'd be a sight more company to her. You see, I'm so big now, and strong, and ——" Matt's voice seemed to die away. But Nonny did not notice. It was queer of Matt to want to go back to the city, he thought; but Matt was queer. Nonny remembered that. Matt used to be mean and hateful, and now Nonny liked Matt the best of any of the boys.

"Don't tell about me; we'll s'prise the boys," said Matt. "I'll tell Miss Pitts about my wanting to go back, and I'll tell her you'll take my place and stay with her."

"Will you, truly, Matt?"

"Sure I will. I'll tell her to-night," declared Matt. "You go ahead down to the brook with the other fellows. I'm going this way," and Matt turned suddenly and walked toward the road.

Nonny hurried to join Arthur Joyce and the twins, who were all seated on a big flat rock near the brook. They sat there silent and quiet.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Nonny, who felt that it was a time to rejoice, and not sit looking at a brook.

“You look just like three frogs ready to jump into the water,” Nonny continued laughingly.

“Humph!” grumbled Arthur. “Guess you’ll look like a frog yourself about this time next week, when we’re back at the ’sylum.”

“I’m not going back!” declared Nonny.

The twins jumped up eagerly, and Arthur asked: “Where are you going?”

“I can’t tell yet,” Nonny replied.

“Is it the Harpers’?”

“Is it the Parkers’?”

These questions came in a chorus, as the three boys gathered around Nonny. Nonny shook his head smilingly. “It’s a secret,” he replied; “it isn’t the Parkers’, and it isn’t the Harpers’, and it isn’t Mr. Goddard.” Nonny spoke the last name a little regretfully, for he had liked the clergyman very much indeed; and he liked Miss Goddard, and the square white house with its quiet rooms.

"Then I don't see who is going to take you," said Arthur.

"It's a secret," repeated Nonny. "I can't tell anybody about it just yet."

"You'll be the next one, Arthur," said Chester. "I s'pose nobody'll take us 'cause we're twins," and Chester and Charles looked at each other questioningly. It did not occur to the Watson boys that they could ever be separated.

While the boys talked by the brook Matt walked rapidly along the road. He began to wonder why he had told Nonny that he wanted to go back to the city. "I guess I owed it to Nonny to give him my chance. I used to be awful mean to him," Matt thought, recalling the sly taunts and occasional hateful slaps he had bestowed on the little cripple.

Matt was so engrossed in his own thoughts that he had not heard the sound of wheels behind him, and when Mr. Goddard called out: "Hullo, Matthew! Don't you want a ride?" the boy gave a sudden jump.

"I don't mind," he answered.

"Well, climb in," and Mr. Goddard reached down to help the boy up.

“So you are going to live with Miss Pitts, Matthew,” said Mr. Goddard, as they rode along.

“No, sir!” responded Matthew. “I’m going back to the ’sylum. I guess Miss Pitts is going to take Nonny.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

### UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS

“So you really like the city better than Skillings Village?” said Mr. Goddard when Matthew had briefly told of his intention to return to the orphan asylum.

Matthew looked away across the pleasant fields, and Mr. Goddard could not see his face, or quite understand the boy's reply.

“And is Nonny happy at the thought of staying with Miss Pitts? I'm rather disappointed, Matthew,” continued the clergyman, without waiting for an answer to his question. “For my sister and I became greatly attached to Nonny, and we were going over to Orchard House this very afternoon to talk with Phineas and Miss Pitts in regard to my adopting Nonny.”

Matt turned a radiant face toward the clergyman.

“That's fine. I'm mighty glad. He'd rather be your boy than anybody's. I can stay with Miss Pitts now. I used to be so mean to Nonny that ——” Matt

stopped suddenly. He had not intended to say so much about himself.

“I understand, and I’m glad enough, Matthew, that you wanted to be so generous. I think Miss Pitts is going to be proud of you,” and Mr. Goddard smiled down at the brown-faced boy beside him. “But I’m afraid that you forgot that it was you, Matthew, whom Miss Pitts wanted,” continued Mr. Goddard. “I don’t believe any one could have persuaded her to give you up.”

“Honest?” Matthew asked, as if this statement was really too good to be easily believed.

“Honest!” Mr. Goddard replied. “She thinks a great deal of you.”

Matthew sat very still, looking straight ahead. He wished he was out alone on the pasture hill where he could jump about, and, well, perhaps cry a little, if he wanted to.

“You’ll be all ready for school in a few weeks,” Matt heard Mr. Goddard say, “but I think I shall teach Nonny at home this winter, and let him begin school with the spring term.”

When Mr. Goddard and Matt returned from their drive Nonny was at the gate.

“Want to go home with me, Nonny?” asked Mr.

Goddard. "And you might as well pack up your things while I speak to Miss Pitts," and Mr. Goddard went up the path, leaving Nonny looking at Matthew as if to ask what this meant.

"Go ahead, Nonny. He's going to adopt you," said Matt, "and don't say a word to Miss Pitts about what I told you. It's all right. I'm going to stay."

"You look as if you were glad!" Nonny exclaimed in a surprised tone.

"Of course I'm glad! It's fine. Chase into the house and pick up your things, and tell the boys good-bye. You're going for good," declared Matt, and off Nonny ran; but it seemed to Nonny that everything was happening at once, and he began to wonder why Matt had changed his mind so suddenly.

"I guess Miss Pitts likes him best, anyway," decided the little boy, as he picked up his few belongings, not forgetting his treasured bow and arrows.

"You said it wasn't Mr. Goddard!" chorused the Watson twins accusingly, when Nonny came downstairs with his bundle of clothing.

"I didn't know it was going to be," Nonny hastened to explain, "but I'm real glad it is."

There was no time for any further explanations, for Mr. Goddard was waiting.

As they drove away Nonny turned to wave his cap to the little group at the gate, and gave a happy little laugh. "Ain't I lucky?" he demanded, looking up at Mr. Goddard.

"It beats all how things settle themselves," declared Miss Pitts to Phineas, when she told him of Nonny's departure.

Phinny thought the Orchard House boys were proving very fortunate.

"Isn't it splendid that three of them have found just the right homes!" he said that night to Mother Burton and Cathie, as he told them the good news about Nonny Sykes.

Cathie looked at him a little reproachfully. "Nobody seems to want the twins, or Arthur Joyce," she said. "I've said everything I can say to Miss Parker; but I believe she would rather adopt a girl," and there was a little note of scorn in Cathie's voice.

"Well, Cathie, maybe when you have six girls here next summer you'll be real glad that Miss Parker wasn't anxious to adopt twin boys," said Mother Burton.

"Perhaps," agreed Cathie, smilingly, "but I hope two of my asylum girls will be twins, because you know

Miss Parker said that she and her brother wouldn't think of adopting one child. What are you smiling at, Phin Burton?" she concluded suddenly.

"I was thinking of how anxious you were to have somebody adopt me four years ago, when I ran away from the asylum," replied Phineas.

"Well, and all of those people are very sorry now that they didn't adopt you," declared Cathie, "and the Parkers will be just as sorry if they let Chester and Charles go back."

"I don't know as I should go as far as that, Cathie. You can't expect every asylum boy to be a Phineas Burton," said Mrs. Burton looking proudly at her adopted son.

It seemed very quiet at Orchard House that night. Matt was the only one of the boys who had much to say. Arthur Joyce hardly spoke while they were at the supper table, and Chester and Charles Watson even refused a second helping of caramel custard.

"I declare, Matthew, I shall be real glad when the time comes for you and me to go to our own house," Miss Pitts said as she bade Matt good-night.

The next morning Chester announced that he was going for a walk. "Don't wait dinner for me, Miss Pitts," he said cheerfully. "I may be late. But don't

worry. I shan't go off to try and live in the woods the way Andrew did."

"I should hope not," said Miss Pitts, and watched Chester marching sturdily along the road.

Charles and Arthur went off with Andrew and Len on a fishing excursion, while Matt was busy in Phinny's workshop preparing basket material. Chester had not even told his twin brother where he was going. He had decided on what seemed to him a very daring adventure: he would walk to the Parker farm and ask them if he and Charles could not come there to live.

"Miss Parker's real good," the little boy thought as he walked along, "and I'll say they needn't really and truly adopt us, if they'll just let us stay and work our board."

It was a long walk, and Chester was very warm and tired when he came in sight of the low buildings of the old Parker farm.

"I think it's the nicest place I ever saw," thought the little boy, looking admiringly at the vine-covered porch, and the long red barn. "It would be fine to live there."

Miss Parker was sitting on the porch, and called out a welcome as Chester came up the path.

"You're a real good boy to take such a long walk to

see us," she said cordially, "and Washington will be just as pleased as I am. You sit right down here beside me and rest."

Chester sat down, but someway, now that he was close beside Miss Parker, and listening to her pleasant voice, it was not easy to tell her his errand. He resolved to wait until Mr. Washington Parker came in to dinner, for Miss Parker said that dinner would soon be ready. "You keep a lookout for Washington while I step into the kitchen a minute," she said to Chester at last.

"I'll ask him the minute I see him," resolved Chester. And as he saw Mr. Parker coming across the yard toward the house Chester ran to meet him.

"Well! well! Young man, glad to see you," said Mr. Parker, and Chester's little rough hand was warmly clasped, and Mr. Parker kept it in his own as they walked back to the porch. But Chester did not tell his errand. Someway he felt sure that it would not be of any use, so the little boy grew very silent; he did not seem to enjoy his dinner, and Miss Parker and her brother exchanged anxious looks over the little boy's brown head.

"I'll drive you home; it's most too warm for you to walk so far," Mr. Parker said when Chester had managed

to say that he must go back to Orchard House. And suddenly Chester's courage returned.

"I don't want to go back to the asylum, and Charlie don't want to go back. Can't we come and live here? You've got lots of room. We'll work our board; we'll be just as good as we can. We'll ——" Chester stopped suddenly. He wished he had kept quiet, for Miss Parker was not even looking at him. She was looking at Mr. Parker and saying:

"You harness just as quick as ever you can, Washington," and without a word Mr. Parker hurried out of the dining-room.

Chester wondered what they would say to him; he felt almost frightened. Miss Parker had turned away from him and was looking out of the window. He heard the sound of wheels and saw Mr. Parker drive out of the yard.

He stood silent and unhappy. It seemed to Chester that these kind people whom he liked so much were now angry with him. He wished he had gone fishing with the other boys. Then Miss Parker turned toward him; she was wiping her eyes, but he was glad to see that she was smiling.

"Washington will fetch your things over, and bring Charles back," she said. "I guess you don't realize,

Chester, how pleased we are that you let us see just how you felt. We weren't going to say a word about adopting you boys until you showed some sign of wanting to live here. And Washington began to be almost afraid that the sign wouldn't come."

It was some little time before Chester really understood that Mr. Washington Parker was on his way to Orchard House to bring Charles back with him, and that the twins were to live with the Parkers.

"I guess Washington will explain it to Miss Pitts and Phineas Burton," continued Miss Parker. "We always said that one boy would be lonesome to live with old folks like us, but it will be complete to have two boys."

"You're not old," declared Chester promptly, "and we'd rather live here than any place."

"We shall take comfort with you, I can see that," said Miss Parker. "Cathie Burton told me that she guessed the Watson twins came to Orchard House on purpose for Washington and me to adopt, and I guess you did."

After the twins left Orchard House it was decided that Miss Pitts and Matthew should go to Miss Pitts' home in the village, and that Arthur Joyce should stay at Mrs. Burton's for the few remaining days before the

time set for his return to the asylum. Phinny and Cathie did all they could to make these days pleasant for the little boy, but Arthur felt very solitary. He wondered why all the other boys should have found homes and he be the only one to go back to the orphan asylum.

The morning for Arthur's departure came, and Len drove Phineas and his young charge to the station. Phineas was to take Arthur to Boston. Cathie hung over the gate and watched them drive away.

"It spoils everything to have Arthur go back," she said to Mother Burton, "and I was so sure that the Harpers would take him. They nearly promised."

It was an hour later when Len and Phinny came driving into the yard.

"What's the trouble?" called Mrs. Burton, following Cathie, who had run out to meet them. "Did you send Arthur off alone?"

Phinny threw his cap into the air, and tried to dance a jig, while his mother and sister gazed at him in amazement.

"He's crazy," declared Len laughingly. "You see Harry Harper caught us at the station, just before the train came, and took Arthur off to Harper farm. Harry said his father didn't want to adopt Arthur, but

they'd agree to keep him until he was eighteen. Great, isn't it!" and Len looked from Mrs. Burton to Cathie.

"It's perfectly splendid," declared Cathie happily.

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