

The Bobbsey Twins at Meadow Brook

Laura Lee Hope

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THE BOBBSEY TWINS AT MEADOW BROOK

By Laura Lee Hope

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CHAPTER I

A CROCKERY CRASH

"Well, here we are back home again!" exclaimed Nan Bobbsey, as she sat down in a chair on the porch. "Oh, but we have had _such_ a good time!"

"The best ever!" exclaimed her brother Bert, as he set down the valise he had been carrying, and walked back to the front gate to take a small satchel from his mother.

"I'm going to carry mine! I want to carry mine all the way!" cried little fat Freddie Bobbsey, thinking perhaps his bigger brother might want to take, too, his bundle.

"All right, you can carry your own, Freddie," said Bert, pleasantly. "But it's pretty heavy for you."

"It--it isn't very heavy," panted Freddie, as he struggled on with his bundle, his short fat legs fairly "twinkling" to and fro as he came up the walk. "It's got some cookies in, too, my bundle has; and Flossie and I are going to eat 'em when we get on the porch."

"Oh, so that's the reason you didn't want Bert to take your package, is it?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile, as she patted the little fat chap on the head.

"Oh, well, I'll give Bert a cookie if he wants one," said Freddie, generously, "but I'm strong enough to carry my own bundle all the way; aren't I, Dinah?" and he appealed to a fat, good-natured looking colored woman, who was waddling along, carrying a number of packages.

"Dat's what yo' is, honey lamb! Dat's what yo' is!" Dinah exclaimed. "An' ef I could see dat man ob mine, Sam Johnson, I'd make him take some ob dese yeah t'ings."

As Dinah spoke there came from around the corner of the house a tall, slim colored man, who as soon as he saw the party of returning travelers, ran forward to help them carry their luggage.

"Well, it's about time dat yo' come t' help us, Sam Johnson!" exclaimed his wife. "It's about time!"

"Didn't know yo' all was a-comin', Dinah! Didn't know yo' all would get heah so soon, 'deed I didn't!" Sam exclaimed, with a laugh, that showed his white teeth in strange contrast to his black face. "Freddie, shall I take yo' package? Flossie, let me relieve yo', little Missie!"

"No, Sam, thank you!" answered the little girl, who was just about the size and build of Freddie. "I have only Snoop, our cat, and I can carry him easily enough. You help Dinah!"

"'Deed an' he had better help me!" exclaimed the colored cook.

Sam took all the packages he could carry, and hurried with them to the stoop. But he had not gone very far before something happened.

From behind him rushed a big dog, barking and leaping about, glad,

probably, to be home again from part of the summer vacation.

"Look out, Sam!" called Bert Bobbsey, who was carrying the valise his mother had had. "Look out!"

"What's de mattah? Am I droppin' suffin?" asked Sam, trying to turn about and look at all the bundles and packages he had in his arms and hands.

"It's Snap!" cried Nan, who was sitting comfortably on the shady porch. "Look out for him, Sam."

"Snap! Behave yourself!" ordered little fat Flossie, as she set down a wooden cage containing a black cat. "Be good, Snap!"

"Here, Snap! Snap! Come here!" called Freddie.

Snap, the big dog, was too excited just then to mind. With another loud, joyous bark he rushed up behind Sam, and, as the colored man of all work about the Bobbsey place had very bow, or curved, legs, Snap ran right between them. That is, he ran half way, and then, as he was a pretty fat dog, he stuck there.

"Good land ob massy!" exclaimed Sam, as he looked down to see the dog half way between his bow legs, Snap's head sticking out one way, and his wagging tail the other. "Get out ob dat, Snap!" cried Sam. "Get out! Move on, sah!"

"Bow wow!" barked Snap, which might have meant almost anything.

"Look out!" shouted Sam. "Yo'll upset me! Dat's what you will!"

And indeed it did seem as though this might happen. For Sam was so laden down with packages that he could not balance himself very well, and had almost toppled over.

"Here, Snap!" called Bert, who was laughing so hard that he could hardly stand up, for really it was a funny sight.

"Don't call him, Bert," advised Mrs. Bobbsey. "If you do he'll run out, and then Sam surely will be knocked over. And there are some fresh eggs in one of those packages he took from Dinah."

Snap himself did not seem to know what to do. There he was, tightly held fast, his fat sides between Sam's bow legs. Snap could go neither forward nor backward just then. He barked and wagged his tail, for he knew it was all in fun.

"Open your legs wider, Sam, man!" exclaimed his wife. "Den de dorg kin git out!"

Sam, holding tightly to the packages, did manage to stoop down and so spread his legs a little farther apart. This released Snap, who, with a happy bark, and a wild wagging of his tail, bounded up on the stoop where Nan sat.

A little later the whole Bobbsey family, with the exception of Mr. Bobbsey, were sitting comfortably in the porch chairs, while Sam was opening the front shutters, having already unlocked the front door for

the returning family.

"Home again!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey, with a little sigh, as she looked around at the familiar scenes. "My, but how dusty it is after being on the lovely water."

"Yes'm, dey shuah has been lots ob dust!" exclaimed Sam. "We need rain mighty bad, an' I've had de garden hose goin' ebery night, too."

"I'll soon sweep off dish yeah porch," said Dinah. "Sam, yo' git me a broom."

"Oh, don't bother now, Dinah," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Make a cup of tea, first. The dust doesn't matter, and we'll not be here long."

"Won't we?" exclaimed Nan. "Oh, where are we going next?"

"We'll talk about it as soon as your father comes home," said Mrs. Bobbsey, for her husband had stopped on the way from the houseboat dock, where the family had lately landed, to go to his lumber office for a little while.

"Let Snoop out!" begged little Flossie. "Snoop's tired of being shut up in that box." In order to carry him from the boat to the house Snoop had been put in a small traveling crate.

"I'll let him out as soon as I get a screwdriver," promised Bert. "My, but it's hot here!"

"Indeed it is," agreed his mother, who was fanning herself with her pocket handkerchief as she sat in a rocking-chair. "It isn't much like our nice houseboat, is it?"

"No, indeed," agreed Nan. "I wish we hadn't come home."

"And summer is only half over," went on Bert. "Here it is only August."

"Oh, well, there are plenty of good times ahead of you children yet, before school begins," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Now let's see. Have we everything?" and she looked at the pile of bundles and valises on the porch.

"I guess we didn't forget anything, except papa," said Freddie. "And he's coming," he added, as the others laughed.

"Sam, am de fire made?" demanded Dinah. "I wants t' make a cup ob tea."

"Fire all made," reported the colored man. "I'll go git a fresh pail ob water now. I didn't know jest prezackly when yo' was comin'," he said to Mrs. Bobbsey, "or I'd a' been down to de dock t' meet de houseboat."

"Might a' come anyhow," muttered Dinah. "Yo' all didn't hab nuffin' t' do heah!"

"Huh! I didn't, eh?" cried Sam. "Nuffin' t' do! Why, I cut de grass, an' fed de chickens, an' watered de lawn, an'--an'--"

"Go 'long wif yo'," ordered his wife with a laugh. "Bring in some mo' wood for de fire!"

"And get a screw-driver so I can let Snoop out," begged Flossie. "He's tired of being shut up in the crate!"

"Right away, Missie! Right away!" promised good-natured Sam.

A little later Snoop, the black cat, was stretching himself on the porch, while Snap, the big dog, rushed up and down the lawn, barking loudly to let all the neighbors' dogs know he was back home again--at least for a time.

Meanwhile Bert, as the "little man of the house," had brought in the packages and satchels from the porch. Nan was helping her mother get out a cool kimona, while Dinah was down in the kitchen getting ready a cup of tea for Mrs. Bobbsey.

Flossie and Freddie, as the youngest Bobbsey twins, had nothing in particular to do, so they ran about, here, there, everywhere, renewing acquaintance with the familiar objects about the yard--things they had forgotten during the two months they had been away on a houseboat, for part of their summer vacation.

"Oh, look! My flower-bed is full of weeds!" cried Flossie, as she came to a corner of the yard where she had set out some pansy plants just before going away.

"And I can't even see the lettuce I planted," said Freddie. "I guess Sam didn't weed our gardens."

"Never mind, we can make new ones," Flossie said. "Oh, Freddie, look! There's a strange cat!" Both children ran to where Snoop was making the acquaintance of a pussy friend. The cats seemed to like one another and the strange one let the little twins pet it as it lapped some milk from Snoop's saucer.

A little later Dinah called Flossie and Freddie into the house to have a glass of milk and some bread and jam, for it was past lunch time. The small twins came willingly enough.

"What are we going to do the rest of the summer?" asked Nan, as she sat next to her mother at the table. "Are we going away again?"

"I hope so!" exclaimed Bert. "The houseboat suited me, but if we can have a trip to the seashore, or go to the country, so much the better."

"We shall see," half-promised Mrs. Bobbsey. "As soon as papa comes home from the office, he will know how much more time he can spare from business to go with us. Then I can tell you--"

"There he comes now, mamma!" exclaimed Nan. "Oh, excuse me for interrupting you," she went on, for Mrs. Bobbsey insisted upon the children being just as polite at home, and to one another, as they would be among strangers.

"That's all right, Nan," said her mother kindly. "When papa comes in,

and has had a cup of tea, we'll talk over matters, and decide what to do."

"Well, are you all settled?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, as he came in, catching little Freddie up in his strong arms. "Haven't put out any fires since you got here, have you?" he asked, for Freddie had a great love for playing fireman, and he often put out "make-believe" blazes with a toy fire engine he had, which squirted real water.

"No alarms to-day," laughed Freddie, for his father was tickling him in his "fat ribs," as Freddie called them.

"How's my little fat fairy?" went on Mr. Bobbsey, catching Flossie up as he had Freddie.

"All right," she answered. "Oh, papa, your whiskers prick!" she cried, as Mr. Bobbsey kissed her.

"Sit down and have a cup of tea," invited Mrs. Bobbsey. "Then we can talk about what we are to do. The children are anxious to get away again, and if we _are_ to go there is no need of unpacking more than we have to."

"Would you like to go to Meadow Brook?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, looking at his happy family.

"You know I would," answered his wife, with a smile.

"Meadow Brook! Oh, are we going there?" cried Nan.

"Well, Uncle Daniel has sent us an invitation," said Mr. Bobbsey, "and your mother and I are thinking of it."

"Can you leave your lumber business long enough to go with us?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I think so," replied her husband. "I just stopped at the office, and everything there is going along nicely. So I think we'll go to Meadow Brook, in the country, for the rest of the summer."

"Hurray! Hurrah! Oh, how nice!" cried the children.

"Dinah, I think I'll have another cup of tea," went on Mr. Bobbsey, as the colored cook waddled in. "Make it cold, this time--with ice in it. I am very warm."

"Yais-sah," said Dinah, taking his cup.

Then followed a confusion of talk, the two sets of twins doing the most. They were joyfully excited at the idea of going to Meadow Brook farm.

"I'm going to turn somersaults in the grass--just like this," cried Freddie, rolling over and over on the floor. He rolled toward the door that led from the dining-room to the kitchen, and, just as he reached it, Dinah came in with Mr. Bobbsey's cup of iced tea.

Before Freddie could stop himself, and before fat Dinah could get out of the way, the little Bobbsey chap had rolled right into the cook,

and down she went in a heap on the floor, the cup and saucer crashing into dozens of pieces, and the tea spilling all over.

CHAPTER II

NEW SUMMER PLANS

"Oh, Freddie!"

"Oh, Dinah!"

"Are you hurt?"

Thus came the cries, and as Snap, the dog, rushed in just then, barking and leaping about, he made the confusion all the worse.

Mr. Bobbsey sprang from his chair, lifted Freddie out of the way, and then helped Dinah to her feet. The fat, colored cook looked around in a dazed manner, and Freddie, too, did not seem to know just what had happened to him.

"Oh, don't tell me he is hurt--or Dinah, either!" cried Mrs. Bobbsey, holding her hands over her eyes, as though she might see something unpleasant.

"I--I'm not hurt," said Freddie, "but I--I'm all wet!"

"Bress yo' heart, honey lamb! I'se glad ob dat!" cried Dinah, as she wiped her face on her apron, for the tea had splashed on her.

"Are you all right, Dinah?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, setting Freddie down, for he had caught his little fat son up in his arms.

"Shuah, I'se all right, sah," the colored cook answered. "Jest shook up a bit. I'se so fat it doesn't hurt me t' fall," she explained. "An' I shuah am glad I didn't fall on Freddie. He done knocked mah feet right out from under me!"

"Yes, you shouldn't have turned somersaults in the house," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "That wasn't right, Freddie."

"I--I wasn't exactly turning somersaults," Freddie explained, as he dried his face in his pocket handkerchief. "I was jest rollin' over an' over, like I'm goin' to do down at Meadow Brook."

"Well, it was almost as bad as turning somersaults," said Nan. "My, but I got _so_ excited."

"Pooh! It wasn't anything," spoke Bert. "It's a good thing, though, that it was iced tea, instead of being hot."

"Indeed that was a blessing," said Mrs. Bobbsey, while Dinah began picking up the pieces of the cup and saucer. "You must be more careful, Freddie."

"I will, ma," he promised. "But tell us about Meadow Brook. When can we go?"

"Not until you get a dry suit on, at least," said Mr. Bobbsey with a smile. "You had better change, Freddie. You are all wet from my cup of tea."

"I'll put dry things on him," offered Nan, leading the little fellow from the room. "But don't talk over any plans until I come back," she begged.

"We won't," promised her mother.

And while the house is settling into quietness, after the confusion of the temporary home-coming, and the upsetting of Dinah and Freddie, I will take just a few moments to tell my new readers something about the Bobbsey Twins as they have been written about in the other books of this series.

There were two sets of twins, and that may seem strange until I tell you that Bert and Nan, aged about nine, formed one set, and Flossie and Freddie, aged four years younger, made up the second set. Bert and Nan were tall and slim, with dark hair and eyes, while Flossie and Freddie were fat and short, with light hair and blue eyes, making a very different appearance from the older twins.

Besides the two sets of Bobbsey twins, there was Mr. Richard Bobbsey, and his wife Mary. They lived in an Eastern city called Lakeport, on Lake Metoka, where Mr. Bobbsey had a large lumber business.

I might say that Dinah Johnson, and her husband Sam, also formed part of the Bobbsey household, for without Dinah to cook, and without Sam to do everything around the house, from watering the grass to putting out the ashes, I do not know how Mrs. Bobbsey would have gotten along. And then, of course, there was Snoop, the black cat, and Snap, the nice dog, who had once been in a circus, and could do many tricks.

So much for the Bobbsey family. As for what they did, if you will read the first book of the series, which volume is called "The Bobbsey Twins," you will get a good idea of the many good times Flossie, Freddie, Bert and Nan had.

Uncle Daniel Bobbsey, who was Mr. Bobbsey's brother, and his wife, Aunt Sarah, lived in the country at Meadow Brook Farm. They had a ten year old son, named Harry, and he and Bert were great chums whenever they were together.

The Bobbsey twins often went to the country, and also to the seashore, where their Uncle William and Aunt Emily, as well as their cousin Dorothy, lived, at a place called Ocean Cliff.

You may read of the fun the twins had at these places in the country and seashore books.

Bert, Nan, Flossie and Freddie also had fun at school, and when they went to Snow Lodge they had what were, to them, a wonderful series of adventures, and solved a strange mystery.

Their last trip had been on a houseboat. It was called the _Bluebird_,

and they had voyaged down Lake Metoka to Lemby Creek, and through that to Lake Romano, where they had fine times. There was a mystery on the _Bluebird_, but Bert, and his cousin Harry, who was with him, found out what made the queer noises.

Cousin Dorothy was also a guest on the houseboat trip, and she and Nan, who were about the same age, greatly enjoyed themselves. The Bobbseys, and their country and seashore cousins, had come back from the trip, Dorothy going to her home, and Harry to his, when there happened the little accident to Freddie and Dinah, which I have mentioned in the first chapter of this book.

Now the house was quiet once again. Freddie had on a clean dry suit, Dinah had changed her damp apron for a fresh one, and Mr. Bobbsey was sipping his cup of iced tea, which was not spilled this time.

"Now can you tell us what we are going to do the rest of this summer vacation?" asked Bert.

"Yes," said Mr. Bobbsey, "I can. Your Uncle William, as I started to tell you, before Freddie gave us that circus exhibition, has invited us up to Meadow Brook. And, as I have a little time I can spare from my business, I think I shall take you all down there. We can go to the country and have a fine time."

"We had a good time on the houseboat," said Nan. "It was lovely there."

"Indeed it was," agreed Mrs. Bobbsey.

"And when we found the ghost!" exclaimed Bert.

"Hush! You mustn't say ghost!" cautioned Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile. "It wasn't a ghost, you know."

"Well, we thought it was--at first," laughed Bert. "Anyhow we'll have some fun at Meadow Brook."

"I'm going to fly a kite!" declared Freddie.

"All right, as long as you don't tie Snoop to the tail of it," said his father.

"And I'm going to feed the chickens," exclaimed Flossie.

"But you mustn't chase the rooster," cautioned her mother.

"I won't," promised the little fat twin.

"Now when are we going?" asked Nan.

"What train do we take?" Bert wanted to know.

"I'll have to see to all that to-morrow," said Mr. Bobbsey. "We might as well go right off to the country, for it is not very pleasant staying in the hot city. We won't need to unpack much, for we'll stay here only this one night. To-morrow morning we shall start for Meadow Brook."

"And are we going to take the _Bluebird_ along?" inquired Flossie.

"No, the houseboat will stay at home this trip," her mother said.
"There isn't enough water at Meadow Brook to sail the _Bluebird_."

They talked over their new summer plans, and the children were delighted at the prospect of going to see their cousin, their uncle and their aunt.

"Dinah is going, isn't she?" asked Nan.

"Oh, yes, we couldn't get along without her," answered Mrs. Bobbsey with a smile.

"And I'm going to take Snoop!" cried Freddie, hugging the big, black cat, which did not seem to mind being loved so hard.

"Well if Snoop goes, then we ought to take Snap, the dog, too," declared Bert. "Snap would be lonesome if he were left behind, wouldn't he?"

"Oh, may we take them both, mamma?" begged Nan.

"Well, I guess so," was the answer, as Mrs. Bobbsey looked at her husband.

"That will be all right," he nodded. "The country is just the place for dogs and cats--it's better for them than houseboats."

"Oh, what fun we'll have!" sang Flossie. "What lovely times!"

"And I'm going to take my fire engine, and squirt water in it from the brook," declared Freddie.

"Well, be careful not to fall in," his father said. "And now I shall have to go back to the office again, to do a little work so as to get ready for going away again. So I'll leave my little fat fireman and fat fairy for a while," and he smiled at Freddie and Flossie, as he called them by their pet names.

As the Bobbseys were to leave town soon, they did not unpack very much from the valises they had brought from the houseboat.

This boat was tied up at a dock in the lumber yard, which was on the edge of the lake. The children spent the morning playing about in the yard, some of their friends, who had not gone away for the summer, coming to join in their games.

After lunch Mr. Bobbsey came up to the house in an automobile, bringing his wife some things she had asked him to get from the store.

"Oh, may I have a ride?" begged Freddie, when he saw his father in the machine, which Mr. Bobbsey and some of the other members of his lumber firm used when they were in a hurry.

"Yes, jump in!" invited his father. "Want to come, Bert?" he asked of the older Bobbsey boy.

"Yes, thank you," was the answer. "Where are you going?"

"I have to go up the lake shore, to a place called Tenbly, to see another lumber dealer on some business," Mr. Bobbsey said. "Where are Nan and Flossie?" he asked his wife, who had come out on the porch just then. "I could take them along also. There is plenty of room."

"Flossie and Nan have gone over to Mrs. Black's house," Mrs. Bobbsey said. "Run along without them. It's just as well. I'd rather they wouldn't be out in the hot sun, as we have to take a long train journey to-morrow."

"All right," agreed Mr. Bobbsey, as he started off in the automobile with Freddie and Bert. "We'll soon be back."

Neither Mr. Bobbsey nor the boys knew what was to happen on that ride, nor how it was to affect them afterward.

CHAPTER III

THE RUNAWAY BOY

It was a pleasant trip for Freddie and Bert to ride with their father in the automobile along the shady shores of the lake. The little twin, and the bigger one, sat back on the cushions, now and then bouncing up and down as the machine went over a rough place in the road.

Freddie, being lighter than Bert, bounced up and down oftener, but then he was so fat, almost "like a lump of butter," as his mother used to say, that he did not much mind it.

"I wish we could take this machine to Meadow Brook Farm with us," said Bert, as they neared the lumber yard of Mr. Mason, with whom Mr. Bobbsey had business that day.

"We can ride in one of Uncle Daniel's carriages," said Freddie. "Or maybe I can ride horse-back. That would be fun!" he cried, his bright eyes sparkling.

"It's fun--if you don't fall off," Bert said.

As the automobile passed around a curve in the road, where the lake could be seen stretching out its sparkling waters in the bright sun, Bert suddenly uttered a cry, and pointed ahead.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "There are two little girls drifting out in that boat, and they don't seem to know how to row to shore."

Mr. Bobbsey steered the machine down to the edge of the lake, over the grass at one side of the road. As he did so he and the two boys heard voices faintly calling:

"Help!! Help! Oh, somebody please come and get us!"

"I'll get them--I can row, and there's another boat on shore," said Bert, pointing to a craft drawn up on the sand.

"I guess I'd better go out--you stay with Freddie," directed the lumber merchant, as he brought the automobile to a stop, and jumped out.

"I'm coming!" he called to the two little girls in the drifting boat. "Don't be afraid, and sit still! Don't stand up!"

He needed to caution them thus, for one of the girls, seeing that help was on the way, grew so excited that she stood up, and this is always dangerous to do in a rowboat on the water. Rowboats tip over very easily, and sometimes even good swimmers may be caught under them.

"I wish I could help get them," sighed fat Freddie, as he saw his father run down to the shore of the lake, and shove the other boat into the water.

"It's best to let papa do it," said Bert, though he himself would have liked to have gone to the rescue.

"They'll mind papa, and sit down and keep still, but they wouldn't mind us," went on Bert, explaining matters to his little brother.

"That's right," agreed Freddie. "Girls are awful 'fraid in a boat, anyhow. I'm not afraid."

"Well, not all girls are afraid, either," said Bert with a smile. "Nan isn't afraid."

"Of course not--she's our sister, and so is Flossie!" exclaimed Freddie, as if that made a difference!

Mr. Bobbsey was now rowing out to the two small girls in the drifting boat. They did not seem to have any oars, and Bert and Freddie heard their father call to them again to sit down, so they would not tip over.

Then the lumber man reached the drifting craft, and carefully fastened it by a rope to the boat he was in.

"Now sit quietly and I'll pull you to shore," he said to the girls. "You must not come out in a boat all alone. Where is your home?"

"Up there," replied the older girl, pointing to a house back of the lake shore road. "We didn't mean to come out," she went on. "We just sat in the boat when it was tied fast to the dock, but the knot must have come loose, and we drifted out. We're ever so much obliged to you for coming out to us."

"Well, don't get in boats again, unless some older person is with you," cautioned Mr. Bobbsey. By this time he had towed the boat, with the girls in it, to shore. As he did so a woman came running from the house, calling out:

"Oh, what has happened? Oh, are they drowned?"

"Nothing at all has happened," said Mr. Bobbsey, quietly. "Your children just drifted out, and I went and got them."

"Oh, and I've told them never, never to get into a boat!" cried the mother. "Girls, girls! What am I going to do to you?" she went on. "You might have fallen overboard."

"Yes, that is true, they might have," said Mr. Bobbsey. "But I think this will be a lesson to them, and no harm has come to them this time. But it is best for children to keep out of boats."

"Indeed it is," agreed the lady. "Oh, I can't thank you enough, sir!" she said to Mr. Bobbsey. "I have told Sallie and Jane never to go out on the lake unless Frank is with them, but he isn't here now."

"Is Frank their brother?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Not exactly a brother. My husband is his guardian," the lady went on. "I am Mrs. Mason."

"Oh, I am glad to know you," said Mr. Bobbsey. "I am on my way to your husband's office now, to see him on business. I am glad I could do you a favor."

"Indeed it is more than a favor," said Mrs. Mason. "I cannot thank you enough. When Frank was home I did not worry so much about the girls, as he looked after them. But my husband thinks he is now old enough to help in the lumber yard, and so he keeps him down at the office. You are going down there, you say?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Bobbsey. "I am going along the river road."

"I can show you a shorter route," said Mrs. Mason, who now had tight hold of her daughters' hands, as though she feared they would run down to the boats again. "My husband has cut a new road through the orchard, down to his office," she went on. "You can come that way in your machine, and save nearly a mile."

"I shall be glad to do that," Mr. Bobbsey answered, "as I haven't very much time today. We are getting ready to go away."

Mrs. Mason showed Mr. Bobbsey where he could cross the main road, and take a short cut through an old orchard, to reach the lumber office, and soon, after waving good-bye to the frightened little girls, Mr. Bobbsey, Bert and Freddie were again on their way.

"Is--is the lake very deep where those girls were?" Freddie wanted to know.

"It doesn't make much difference whether it is deep or not," said Mr. Bobbsey, "they would probably have been drowned if they had fallen overboard. You must always be careful about boats," he cautioned the little fellow.

"I will," Freddie promised.

"That must be the lumber yard!" exclaimed Bert a little later, when they turned from the new orchard road into another highway.

"Yes, that is it," Mr. Bobbsey agreed. "I never came this way before. It is a good road to know when you are in a hurry."

Mr. Mason's lumber yard, like that of Mr. Bobbsey, was partly on the edge of the lake, so the logs, boards and planks could be easily loaded and unloaded from boats. Part of the yard was on the other side of the road, back from the lake, and it was on this side that the office was built.

As Mr. Bobbsey and his two boys rode up in the automobile, they saw out in front of the office a strange and not very pleasant sight. A man stood there, roughly shaking a boy about Bert's age. The boy seemed to be crying, and trying to get away, but the man held him tightly by one arm, and shook him again and again.

"I don't like that," said Mr. Bobbsey in a low voice, as he stopped the automobile.

"What makes him do it?" asked Freddie. "Is the boy bad?"

"I'll teach you to make me lose money that way!" cried the man as he again roughly shook the boy. "You ought to have better sense than to be cheated that way! It wasn't your money that you lost, it was mine, and money isn't so easily made these days!"

"But I couldn't help it!" the boy cried, trying to pull his arm away. He could not do this, for the man held it too tightly.

"Yes, you could help it too, if you'd had your eyes open!" the man said in harsh tones. "I left you in charge of the office, and you ought to have been sharp enough not to be fooled and cheated. I--I don't know what to do to you!"

Again he shook the boy.

"Ouch! You hurt, Mr. Mason!" cried the lad.

"Well, you deserve to be hurt, losing money that way," was the answer. "I--I've a good notion to--"

But the sentence was not finished. Just then, by a sudden motion, the boy pulled away from the man who was shaking him, and ran down the road. For a moment it seemed as if the man would run after him, but he did not. The two stood looking at one another, while Mr. Bobbsey, having alighted from the automobile, walked up toward the lumber office.

"You'd better come back here, Frank," called the man who had been shaking the boy. "You'd better come back."

"I'll never come back!" was the answer. "I--I'm going to run away! I'll never live with you again! You treat me too mean! It wasn't my fault about that bad money! I couldn't help it. I'm going to run away, and I'm never coming back again. I can't stand it here!"

Bursting into tears, the boy raced off down the road in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER IV

OFF FOR MEADOW BROOK

Little Freddie, who sat beside his older brother, Bert, in Mr. Bobbsey's automobile, looked on with wonder in his childish eyes, as he saw the boy Mr. Mason had been shaking run down the road.

"What's the matter with him, Bert?" Freddie asked. "Didn't he like to be shook?"

"I should say _not_!" exclaimed Bert. "And I wouldn't myself. I don't think that man did right to shake him so."

"It was too bad," added Freddie. "Say, Bert," he went on eagerly, "maybe we could catch up to him in the automobile, and we could take him to Meadow Brook with us. Nobody would shake him there."

"No, I guess they wouldn't," said Bert: slowly, thinking how kind his uncle and aunt were.

"Then let's go after him!" begged Freddie.

"No, we couldn't do that, Freddie," Bert said with a smile at his little brother. "The boy maybe wouldn't want to come with us, and besides, papa wouldn't let me run the auto, though I know which handles to turn, for I've watched him," Bert went on, with a firm belief that he could run the big car almost as well as could Mr. Bobbsey.

"Well, when papa comes back I'm going to ask him to go after that boy and bring him with us," declared Freddie. "I don't like to see boys shook."

"I don't, either," murmured Bert.

By this time Mr. Bobbsey had come up to where Mr. Mason was standing.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Bobbsey," spoke the other lumber man. "I didn't expect to see you for some days."

"I did come a little ahead of time," went on the twins' father. "But I am going to take my family off to the country, so I thought I would come and see you, and finish up our business before going away."

"I'm always glad to talk business," Mr. Mason said, "but I thought your folks were out somewhere on a houseboat."

"We were, and just came back to-day. But the summer isn't over, and we're going to my brother's place, at Meadow Brook Farm. But you seem to be having some trouble," he went on, nodding down the road in the direction the sobbing boy had run. "Of course it isn't any affair of mine, but--"

"Yes, trouble! Lots of it!" interrupted Mr. Mason bitterly. "I have had a lot of trouble with that boy."

"That's too bad," spoke Mr. Bobbsey. "He seems a bright sort of chap. He isn't your son, is he?"

"No, I'm his guardian. He's my ward. His father was a friend of mine in business, and when he died he asked me to look after the boy. His name is Frank Kennedy."

"Oh, yes, I heard about him," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"Heard about him! I guess you didn't hear any good then!" exclaimed the other lumber man, rather crossly. "What do you mean?"

"Why, we came past your house a little while ago," said Mr. Bobbsey, "and your wife mentioned a Frank Kennedy who used to take your two daughters out rowing. If he had been there to-day the girls probably wouldn't have gone out alone, and drifted away."

"Drifted away! What do you mean?" cried Mr. Mason. "Has anything happened?"

"It's all right, my papa went out in a boat and got 'em!" cried Freddie in his shrill, childish voice, for he heard what his father and Mr. Mason were saying.

"I--I don't understand," said the other lumber dealer, seriously. "Was there an accident?"

"Oh, it wasn't anything," Mr. Bobbsey said. "When I went past your house, near the river, I saw the two girls adrift in a boat, not far from shore. They had floated out while playing. I went after them and your wife, before she showed me this short cut to your place, spoke about an adopted boy, Frank Kennedy, who used to play with the children."

"Oh, I'm much obliged to you," said Mr. Mason, after a pause. "Yes, Frank did look after the girls some. That was he who just ran down the road. But he did better at home than he's doing in my office."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, wondering why it was that Mr. Mason had so severely shaken the boy who had run away.

"Well, I mean that Frank just lost twenty dollars for me," proceeded the lumber man.

"Twenty dollars! How was that?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"I left him in charge of my office, while I was out on some other business," went on the lumber dealer, "and a strange man came in and bought two dollars worth of expensive boards. Frank gave them to him, and the man took them away with him, as they were not very large, or heavy to carry."

"Two dollars--I thought you said twenty!" exclaimed Mr. Bobbsey.

"So I did. Wait until I tell you all. As I said, Frank sold this strange man two dollars worth of boards. The man gave Frank a twenty dollar bill, and Frank gave him back eighteen dollars in change."

"Well, wasn't that right?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, with a smile. "Two dollars from twenty leave eighteen--or it used to when I went to

school."

"That part is all right," Mr. Mason said, bitterly, "but the fact is that the twenty dollar bill Frank took from the strange man is no good. It is bad money, and no one but a child would take it. It's a bill that was gotten out by the Confederate states during the Civil War, and of course their money isn't any better than waste-paper now. I don't see how Frank was fooled that way. I wouldn't have been if I had been in the office."

"Perhaps the boy never saw a Confederate bill before," suggested Mr. Bobbsey.

"No matter, he should have known that it wasn't good United States' money!" declared Mr. Mason. "By his carelessness to-day he lost me twenty dollars; the eighteen dollars in my good money that he gave the man in change, and the two dollars worth of boards. And all I have to show for it is that worthless piece of paper!" and Mr. Mason took from his pocket a crumpled bill.

Mr. Bobbsey looked at it carefully.

"Yes, that's one of the old Confederate States' bills all right," he said, "and it isn't worth anything, except as a curiosity."

"It cost me twenty dollars, all right," said Mr. Mason, with a sour look on his face. "I can't see how Frank was so foolish as to be taken in by it."

"Well, the poor boy knew no better, and probably he is sorry enough now," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"I guess he's sorry enough!" exclaimed Mr. Mason, bitterly. "I gave him a good shaking, as he is too big to whip. I shook him and scolded him."

"Well, almost anyone, not very familiar with money, might have made that mistake," spoke Mr. Bobbsey. "This Confederate bill looks very much like some of ours, and a person in a hurry might have been fooled by it."

"Oh, nonsense!" broke in Mr. Mason. "There was no excuse for Frank being fooled as he was. I won't listen to any such talk! He lost me twenty dollars and he'll have to make it up to me, somehow."

"But how can he, when he has run away?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, and he felt very sorry for Frank, who was not much older than Bert. Mr. Bobbsey knew how grieved he would be if something like that happened to his son.

"Yes, he pretended to run away," said Mr. Mason, "but he'll soon run back again."

"How do you know?" Mr. Bobbsey wanted to know. "Did he ever run away before?"

"No, he never did," admitted Mr. Mason, "but he'll have to run back because he has nowhere to run to. He can't get anything to eat, he has no money, and he can't find a place to sleep. Of course he'll come

back!

"And when he does come back," Mr. Mason went on, "I'll make him work doubly hard to pay back that twenty dollars. I can't afford to lose that much money."

"But it was an accident; a mistake that anyone might have made," said Mr. Bobbsey again.

"Nonsense!" cried the other lumber man. "I'll make Frank Kennedy pay for his mistake!"

"Perhaps the strange man did not mean to give him the Confederate bill," went on Bert's father. "Some persons carry those old Southern bills as souvenirs, or pocket-pieces, and this man might have paid his out by mistake. I know that once happened to me with a piece of money. He may come back and give you a good twenty dollar bill."

"I am not so foolish as to hope anything like that will happen," said Mr. Mason. "No, I'm out twenty good hard-earned dollars. That's all there is to it. But I'll get it out of Frank Kennedy, somehow."

"If he ever comes back," said Mr. Bobbsey, in a low voice.

"Oh, he'll come back--never fear!" responded the other lumber dealer. Mr. Bobbsey gently shook his head. He was not so sure of that. Frank, as he ran down the road, crying, seemed to feel very badly indeed, and when he said he would never come back it sounded as though he meant it.

"Poor little chap!" thought Mr. Bobbsey to himself. "I am very sorry for him. I wonder where he will sleep to-night?" And he could not help thinking how badly he would feel if he knew his own two dear boys had to be without a place to sleep, or somewhere to get a meal.

Mr. Mason did not appear to worry about the plight of his ward, for whom he was guardian.

The lumber dealers finished their business and Mr. Mason again thanked Mr. Bobbsey for what he had done for the two girls in the boat.

"I guess I'd better keep Frank at the house after this," went on Mr. Mason. "He's safer there than at the office, and wouldn't lose me so much money. But I'll get it out of him, some way," and he thrust back into his pocket the bad twenty dollar bill.

Bert had understood most of the talk between his father and Mr. Mason, but little Freddie did not know much of what went on except that Frank had run away.

"I wouldn't run away from my home," he said. "I like it too much."

"Yes, but you haven't anyone at your home to shake you as hard as that man did," said Bert. "I don't blame Frank for running away."

"Poor boy!" sighed Mr. Bobbsey. "Life is a hard matter for a little chap with no real home."

In the automobile the lumber man and his two boys went back to

Lakeport, passing on their way the house where Mr. Mason lived. The two little girls waved their hands to Freddie and Bert as the boys rode past. But there was no sign of Frank Kennedy.

The sadness of the scene the two Bobbsey boys had witnessed was soon forgotten in the joys of getting ready to go to Meadow Brook. They spent that night in their city house, unpacking only such few things as they needed. When morning came Flossie and Freddie were the first up.

"We're going to the country!" sang Flossie, walking about in a long night-gown that trailed over the floor.

"Going to Meadow Brook!" chanted Freddie. "Where's Snoop? I'm going to take him!"

"And may we take Snap, too?" asked Bert, who had taught the former circus dog many new tricks.

[Illustration: THE BOBBSEY HOUSE WAS SOON A VERY BUSY PLACE]

"Yes, we'll take them both," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Now hurry, children dear. We are going to leave soon after breakfast, and it is a long ride in the train, you know."

"Are we going to ride in the 'merry-go-round car'?" asked Flossie.

"She means a parlor car, with chairs that swing around," said Nan, with a laugh.

"Yes, we'll ride in a chair car," decided Mr. Bobbsey.

The Bobbsey house was soon a very busy place. Valises that had been opened were packed again. Dinah got a quick breakfast. Mr. Bobbsey had much telephoning to do about business matters, and Mrs. Bobbsey--well, she had to do what all mothers do on such occasions--look after everything. Nan and Bert helped as much as they could.

Flossie and Freddie tried to help, but you know how it is with little children. The two smaller twins were very anxious that Snoop, the black cat, be taken with them in his little traveling crate.

"I'll get him and pack him up," said Freddie.

"And I'll help," offered Flossie.

Soon all was in readiness for the start to the depot where the Bobbseys would take the train for Meadow Brook. Just as the automobile came up to the door to take the family, there arose a cry from the direction of the side porch where Flossie and Freddie had gone with the cat-cage, in which to put Snoop.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "I wonder what has happened now? I hope those twins are all right!"

"I'll go see!" offered Nan, setting off on a run.

CHAPTER V

SNAP'S ESCAPE

Nan found Flossie and Freddie, standing one on either side of the wooden crate in which Snoop made his journeys. The twins each had hold of the black cat, who did not seem to be enjoying life very much just then.

"He goes in this way, I tell you!" shouted Freddie.

"No, he goes in the other way!" cried Flossie, and then they both tried, at the same time, to thrust poor Snoop into his cage.

The cat cried out, and scrambled to get away.

"What's the matter?" asked Nan. "What does all this mean, Flossie and Freddie? Don't you know the automobile is waiting to take us to the station?"

"Well, I want to put Snoop in his cage!" insisted Freddie.

"And so do I!" cried Flossie.

"But she--she--Flossie wants to put him in, tail end first!" went on the excited little boy.

"Course--'cause that's right!" went on the little girl. "Freddie says he ought to go in head first," she exclaimed, "and you know, Nan, if you stand Snoop on his head he'll get dizzy, like I did when I hung dingle-dangle by my legs from the swing."

"And if he goes in tail first he'll get all tangled up!" retorted Freddie, who was almost crying now.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Nan. "I guess I'll have to call papa or mamma, and they have enough to look after as it is, with the auto here, and almost train time. I never saw such children! What am I to do?"

"Let me put Snoop in tail first!" cried Flossie.

"No, he ought to go in his box head first!" declared her brother, and neither one of them would let go of the black cat. Snoop looked sadly at Nan, as though he wished she would rescue him, and put him in the traveling box either end first, if only he might be left in peace and quietness.

"Oh, dear!" Nan exclaimed again. "I really don't know what to do! I guess we'll leave Snoop home altogether!"

"Oh, no!" cried Flossie and Freddie.

"Here! What's all the trouble?" asked Bert, running around to the side porch. "Hurry up! The auto is waiting."

"It's these twins!" said Nan, hopelessly.

"It's Flossie!" accused Freddie. "She wants Snoop to go in tail end first, and he'll get all tangled up, 'cause he's got an awful long tail."

"And Freddie wants to put him in head first, and he'll get dizzy same as I did in the swing!" accused Flossie.

"Here! I'll settle this!" cried Bert, like a manly little chap. "Give me that cat!"

He took Snoop from Flossie and Freddie, who let go willingly enough. If Snoop could have talked he would have said, "Thank you, Bert!" I am sure he would have.

"There, we'll put him in feet first," Bert went on, carefully lowering the black cat into the box that way. "A cat always likes to land feet first," he explained, "then he won't get tangled up in his tail, nor dizzy. Now, Flossie and Freddie, hustle around front and get into the auto. I'll bring Snoop" he continued, as he fastened down the lid of the traveling cage.

"That's right! Feet first!" cried Freddie, a happy smile on his face.

"Of course! Why didn't we think of putting Snoop in that way?" asked Flossie, as she put her chubby hand in her brother's and ran with him around to the front porch.

"Oh, such children!" sighed Nan as she followed Bert, who carried Snoop in his cage. The black cat curled up and went to sleep. He was used to traveling this way.

"My! What was the trouble?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey. Nan and Bert explained, while Flossie and Freddie took their places in the gasoline machine.

"Are you all ready?" asked Mr. Bobbsey. "How about you, Dinah?" for the colored cook was being taken to the country to help look after the smaller twins.

"Oh, indeedy I'se all right, Mrs. Bobbsey," was Dinah's answer. "Heah, Freddie, let ole Dinah carry dat cat-box," for Bert had given Snoop in his cage to the small twin boy.

"No, I want to hold him," Freddie insisted, and he was allowed to have his way.

Sam, Dinah's husband, was to stay home to look after the Bobbsey city house, and he waved a good-bye as the automobile started off.

"Where's Snap?" asked Flossie, as they were rolling down the street.

"He's coming," reported Nan, for the big dog was running alongside the car. There would have been room for him to ride in it, but he preferred racing along the street, and he would be at the depot waiting for the family when they arrived.

"The train will be here in about five minutes," said Mr. Bobbsey, after they had reached the depot, and he had purchased the tickets. Then, while Flossie and Freddie took turns looking in at black Snoop

through the slats of the box, Nan and Bert helped gather the valises into one pile. Mr. Bobbsey went to see about getting the trunks checked, and also about sending Snap in the baggage car, for the dog would have to ride that way to Meadow Brook.

At last, with a toot of the whistle, and a ringing of the bell, the engine, drawing the train, puffed into the station.

"All aboard!" called the conductor.

Many persons were getting on, while others were getting off. Mr. Bobbsey gathered his little family down toward the parlor, or chair, car.

"Heah you am, sah!" exclaimed the colored porter as he swung Flossie and Freddie up the steps, and helped Mrs. Bobbsey and Dinah. Nan and Bert felt big enough not to need any help.

"Hello! What's dish yeah?" cried the porter, as he picked up the box containing Snoop. "Am dish good to eat?" he asked, looking in at the black cat. "What am it?"

"Oh, it's our Snoop!" cried Flossie. "Don't hurt him!"

"Deed an' I won't, little Missie!" laughed the colored porter. "I thought maybe it was a watermelon yo' all had in dat box."

"All aboard!" called the conductor again, and then, with the Bobbseys safely in their chair car, the train puffed away again, going faster and faster.

"The engine can hardly get its breath," remarked Freddie, as he listened to the puffing of the locomotive.

"I guess it's going up hill," said Bert, with a laugh.

The ride to Meadow Brook would take nearly all day, and Mrs. Bobbsey settled herself comfortably in the easy chair to look out of the window, after she had seen that Flossie and Freddie were all right. Nan and Bert looked after themselves, and Mr. Bobbsey, having seen that his family was comfortable, began to read his paper. Dinah took a chair in one corner where she could doze off. It always made her sleepy to ride in a train, she said.

Nan and Bert looked out at the passing scenery, as did Flossie and Freddie, when they were not taking turns peeking in at Snoop. As for the black cat himself, he had curled up into a little round ball, and was fast asleep.

He had become a traveler by this time, for once he had been to Cuba, when the circus lady took him, as I told you in one of the other books.

"I wonder how Snap is getting along in the baggage car?" said Bert to Nan, after a bit. "I think I'll go in and see."

"Oh, will papa let you?" inquired his sister.

"I don't know. I'll ask him."

Mr. Bobbsey was a little doubtful about letting Bert pass from one car to another when the train was moving.

"But it's a vestibule train, papa," said the boy. "It's like one big car. I can't fall off."

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Bobbsey, slowly.

"I'll take him up front, if he wants to see about the dog," said a brakeman who had heard Bert's talk.

"Oh, thank you," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Be careful, Bert."

But, as it turned out, there was no danger at all. As Bert had said, the cars were joined together with "vestibules," that made the train like one big railway coach. And as it was slowing up to stop at a station, when Bert went forward to the baggage car, he had no trouble at all in walking along with the brake-man.

Bert found Snap very glad indeed to see him, and as the train was then at a standstill the boy took the chain off the dog's collar, and let him run about the car a little, for he had to be kept chained fast while the cars were in motion.

"I guess you want to run about a bit, eh, Snap?" said Bert.

"Bow wow!" barked the dog, and that was the best answer he could make. The man in the baggage car had seen to it that Snap had plenty of water to drink, for the day was very hot.

"Better chain him up again, my boy," suggested the baggage man, after a bit. "We'll start pretty soon now."

Bert led Snap over to the side of the car, where the collar-chain dangled, but, just then, Snap, looking out of the door of the baggage car, saw a strange dog on the depot platform. Whether Snap knew this dog, or thought he did, Bert could not tell.

But, an instant later, with a bark, Snap pulled away from Bert's grasp on his collar, and leaped out of the open car door. At the same moment the train started off.

"Snap! Snap!" cried Bert. "Come back here!"

CHAPTER VI

AT MEADOW BROOK

The train was not going very fast when Snap leaped from the baggage car, but, even if it had been moving at greater speed, it is not likely that Snap would have been hurt.

As it was, when the dog leaped from the open door, he did a somersault

in the air, for he had learned to do that while in the circus, when he jumped from a high place.

"Snap! Snap!" called Bert again.

But Snap landed lightly on his feet, and raced across the depot platform toward the dog he had seen.

"Say, that's a fine dog of yours!" cried the baggage man admiringly to Bert. "He must be a trick one."

"He is!" answered Bert. "But can I get him back again? Oh, I must get him!" and he looked about for some way to do this.

"Don't jump out, whatever you do!" warned the brakeman who had brought Bert to the baggage car. The man stood in front of the open door, out of which trunks were taken. But Bert had no idea of doing what Snap had done. Besides, the train was moving quite rapidly now.

"Oh, how can I get my dog back?" Bert wanted to know.

"You can telegraph back, from the next station we stop at, and have the agent there send him on, wherever you are going," explained the baggage man.

"Oh, but we're going a long way," Bert said. "I'm afraid Snap would be lost, traveling alone. Oh, what will Nan say!"

Nan was as fond of Snap as was Bert himself, though perhaps the smaller twins, Flossie and Freddie cared more for Snoop, the black cat. But of course they loved Snap very much.

Poor Bert did not know what to do. Just then his father came running into the car.

"Did Snap get away?" cried Mr. Bobbsey. "Your mother saw a dog on the station platform that looked like him," went on the lumber man to Bert. "Is Snap--"

"He's gone!" interrupted Bert. "He jumped out of the car just now, and--"

"We must stop the train!" Mr. Bobbsey explained.

"All right, I guess we can make up any time we lose," the brakeman said. He reached up and pulled the cord that ran overhead in the car. There was a hissing of air, the locomotive whistle blew sharply, and the train came slowly to a stop. The brakeman had pulled an air whistle in the engine cab, and the engineer, hearing it, and knowing the train ought to stop, had turned off the steam.

Mr. Bobbsey then went to the door of the baggage car, and, leaning out, whistled in a way Snap well knew. He could see the dog, back on the depot platform, "wagging tails" with another dog.

"Here, Snap! Snap!" called Mr. Bobbsey, as the train slowly came to a stop. "Here Snap!"

Bert leaned out beside his father, and also whistled and called. Then

Snap knew he had done wrong to jump out, and back he came, racing as hard as he could.

"I'll open the end door of the car if you wish, so he can come up the steps," offered the brakeman.

"You don't need to, thank you," replied Mr. Bobbsey. "I guess Snap can jump up here, though it is pretty high."

By this time a number of persons from the train had either gotten out, or thrust their heads from the windows, to learn the reason for the sudden stop. But when they saw the dog they understood.

"Up, Snap! Up!" called Mr. Bobbsey, as the children's pet came leaping along beside the track. Snap gave one look up at the high sill of the baggage car door, and then, with a loud bark, he gave a great leap and landed right beside Bert.

"Say, that dog's a fine jumper!" cried several railroad men who had come up to see what the trouble was.

"Yes, he is a pretty good dog, nearly always," Mr. Bobbsey said, "but he made trouble for us to-day. Now, Snap, you'll have to stay chained up the rest of the trip, until we get to Meadow Brook."

Snap would not like that, Bert knew, but nothing else could be done. The train soon started off again, and when Bert and his father went back to the parlor car where the rest of the family were riding they told all that had happened.

"Snoop is better than Snap," said Freddie as he listened to the story.

"Yes, indeed," agreed his sister Flossie. "Snoop wouldn't jump out of a train and make a lot of trouble."

"Well, he did run away, once," declared Nan, who did not like to hear Snap talked about.

"Besides, Snoop is fast in a box, and he wouldn't get out if he wanted to," added Bert, with a laugh.

So the children talked about their pets, now and then looking out of the windows at the scenery, while Dinah dozed off in her chair, and Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey spoke of different matters.

Bert heard something of what his father and mother were saying, and once he heard mentioned the name of Frank Kennedy.

"That's the boy who ran away from Mr. Mason, the lumber man," said Bert to himself. "I wonder what became of him, and if we'll ever see poor Frank again?"

And he little thought how soon, and under what circumstances, he was to meet the unfortunate lad again.

One of the porters, wearing a white cap, jacket and apron walked through the chair car about noon, calling out:

"First call fo' dinner in de dinin' car! First call fo' dinner!"

"Do they eat on trains?" asked Flossie.

"Yes, and at cute little tables," said Nan.

"Did we eat at them the last time we went to Meadow Brook?" Freddie wanted to know.

"No, you were too little then," said Mrs. Bobbsey, "and we brought our lunch with us. But this time we shall go to the diner."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Flossie.

Mr. Bobbsey led the way for his family into the dining-coach. As Nan had said, there were cute little tables against the side of the car, and on each table was a little dish of ferns, and other green plants, making a pretty decoration.

Dinah would not come. She said she would rather eat some chicken sandwiches she had in her bag, and Mr. Bobbsey let the dear old colored cook do as she pleased.

The Bobbsey twins found it so strange to eat in a car, at a real table, while rushing along, that I think they did not eat as much as they would have done at home. But they enjoyed it just the same, though Freddie did splash some water from his finger bowl on the table cloth.

"Oh! Oh!" he exclaimed when he saw what he had done. He looked anxiously at his mother.

"Dat's all right, little man," said the colored waiter with a smile that showed all his white teeth. "Got t' put a clean cloth on anyhow, an' watah doesn't matter."

Freddie felt better then.

The afternoon passed slowly enough. Mr. Bobbsey and Bert went to the baggage car once more, to see about Snap, but they found he was all right, having made friends with one of the men who looked after the travelers' trunks.

Nan read a story book which her mother bought from the train boy, and Flossie and Freddie did what Dinah was doing—took a little nap.

The train was due to arrive at Meadow Brook about five o'clock, and Mr. Bobbsey's brother, Uncle Daniel, was to meet the family at the station.

"Ours is the next stop," said the twins' papa, after a while. "Get your things together now."

"Oh, I had a fine sleep!" cried Freddie, stretching his chubby little arms.

"So did I," added Flossie. "I wonder if Snoop slept any?"

"I guess that's all he has been doing since we started," Mrs. Bobbsey answered. "He's all curled up into a black ball."

Flossie and Freddie looked at their pet, and Snoop stretched, and opened his mouth very wide, sticking out his red tongue.

"My! What a lot of teeth Snoop has!" cried Flossie.

"Did we bring his tooth brush?" asked Freddie.

"Cats don't have tooth brushes!" said Flossie.

"Their tongue is their tooth brush," explained Mrs. Bobbsey. "Did you ever feel how rough a cat's tongue is?"

"I never did!" said Flossie. "I'm going to feel now," and she knelt down on the carpeted floor of the car, and tried to get Snoop to put his red tongue out between the bars of the box.

"Oh, we haven't time for that now," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Get ready to leave the train, Flossie."

Bundles and valises were gotten together, and, a little later, with a screeching of the brakes on the wheels, the train pulled slowly into the Meadow Brook station.

"I see Uncle Daniel!" cried Nan, looking from a window.

"Yes, and there's Harry!" cried Bert, as he spied his country cousin. "Oh, how glad I am!"

"Well, well! How are you all!" laughed Uncle Daniel as he hugged and kissed the two sets of twins. "My, but I'm glad to see you all!" he cried. "Welcome to Meadow Brook!"

"And we're glad to be here!" said Mrs. Bobbsey. "How is Aunt Sarah?"

"Just as fine as can be!" said her husband. "Now I have the same big wagon I had when you were here before. There's room for everybody in it, and all your baggage, too. Where's Dinah? You didn't leave her home, I hope!"

"No, indeedy! I'se heah!" exclaimed the fat, colored cook, who was carrying many bundles.

"Oh, we must get Snap out of the baggage car, before the train carries him away," said Mr. Bobbsey, and he hurried to do that, while his brother, Uncle Daniel, helped the boys and girls and Mrs. Bobbsey into the big wagon from the Bobbsey farm. The wagon had seats running along the side and was very comfortable to ride in.

Mr. Bobbsey soon came back with Snap, who was bouncing about, barking and wagging his tail, so glad was he to be among his friends again.

"Well, are you all ready to start?" asked Uncle Daniel, as I shall call him, to distinguish him from Mr. Bobbsey, who was the farmer's brother.

"All ready, I think," answered Mrs. Bobbsey. And off they started for Meadow Brook farm, the horses prancing through the village streets.

"We'll have a lot of fun," said Harry to Bert, the two boys sitting

next each other. "Maybe not as much fun as we had on your houseboat, Bert, but some, anyhow."

"I'm sure we shall," Bert said. "I like a farm just as much as I do a houseboat," he added politely.

"Have you got any little calves, Uncle Daniel?" asked Freddie.

"Yes," answered the farmer.

"And are there any little lambs?" Flossie wanted to know.

"Yes, but there's an old ram, too, and you want to look out that he doesn't chase you, and knock you down," Mr. Bobbsey's brother went on.

"Oh, is the ram dangerous?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, quickly.

"Oh, no!" her brother-in-law informed her. "His horns are so curved that he can't use the sharp points, but he just does love to come up behind and butt you down. He did it to me the other day. But I keep the ram in a pasture by himself."

The wagon rolled along the shady road, under the green trees, which made a grateful shade, for it was hot even though it was late in the afternoon.

"Oh, there is Tom Mason!" cried Bert, as he saw a country boy he had met when on a visit to Meadow Brook some time before. He waved his hand to Tom who was in his front yard, his house not being far from Mr. Bobbsey's.

"And there's Mabel Herold!" added Nan, as she saw a country girl she knew. "My, how she has grown!" Nan went on. "She didn't use to be up to my shoulder, and now she is taller than I am."

"Oh, the country is a great place for growing," Uncle Daniel said, with a chuckle.

"Mabel and Tom have been counting on your coming," said Harry. "I told them we expected you. We'll have some fine times together!"

"I'm sure of it," agreed Bert.

"Here we are!" called Uncle Daniel a little later, as the horses turned up a driveway in front of the Bobbsey country home. Lines of boxwood hedge grew along the graveled drive, and back of this hedge were beds of beautiful flowers, the perfume of which could be smelled this warm, August day.

"Oh, how lovely it is here," sighed Nan, turning around from having waved a welcome to Mabel Herold.

"Yes, I always like to come to Meadow Brook," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Whoa!" called Uncle Daniel.

The door of the house opened, and in it stood Aunt Sarah, and behind her Martha, the smiling servant.

"Oh, how glad I am to see you!" cried Aunt Sarah, as the children piled down from the wagon to hug and kiss her. "Now get your things off, and we'll have supper," she went on.

"I'm hungry!" announced Freddie.

"So am I!" added Flossie. "There was so much to look at in that eating car, I didn't eat half enough.

"Well, we have plenty here, my dear," said her aunt.

"We must let Snoop out. I guess he's hungry, too," said Freddie, who never forgot the black cat. Snap, the dog, had raced along beside the wagon, and was now cooling his thirst at the spring near the side door.

The Bobbsey visitors were out on the shady porch, having laid aside their traveling wraps, and Uncle Daniel was coming down from the barn, having put away the horses, when a man rushed up the gravel drive, crying:

"Oh, Mr. Bobbsey! Mr. Bobbsey! He's out! He's loose!"

"Who's out? Who's loose?" the twins' uncle wanted to know.

"That old big ram! He's loose, and he's coming this way!" was the answer.

CHAPTER VII

THE PICNIC

The man who had brought the news about the runaway ram, stood on the gravel drive near the porch, breathing hard, for he had run very fast to give the warning. He caught his breath, and then said again:

"The old ram is loose! He butted down the fence and got out. He's headed this way. What'll we do?"

"Children! Into the house with you--quick!" cried Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Oh! Oh!" cried Flossie. "Let me hide! Let me hide!"

"Pooh! I'm not afraid of a ram!" declared Freddie. "If I had my fire engine unpacked, I'd squirt water on him!"

"Better not try that, little fat fireman," said his father with a laugh. "Into the house with you, son. Your mother will look after you."

Nan had already started from the porch, leading Flossie, who kept looking back over her shoulder. From behind the hedge came a cry that sounded like:

"Baa! Baa! Baa!"

"There he comes!" exclaimed Nan. "Come on in, Bert and Harry," she begged the two boy cousins, who were peering eagerly down the road.

"I'm going to watch 'em catch him," said Bert.

"Better not let him see you," advised Harry, the country cousin. "That old ram is a hard hitter."

"Is there really any danger?" asked Mr. Bobbsey of his farmer-brother.

"Well, the old ram is pretty rough, I must say," answered Uncle Daniel, "and most of the men on the farm are afraid of him."

"He's coming right this way, I tell you!" exclaimed the hired man who had brought the news.

"Why should he head this way?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Come along and I'll tell you," his brother promised. "You children had better go into the house," he advised. "Yes, you too, Bert and Harry," he went on, as he saw his own son and Bert following him and Mr. Bobbsey. "No telling what notions old Upsetter will take."

"Is his name Upsetter?" asked Bert.

"It is," replied his uncle. "I call him that because he upsets so many things. He used to be a pet when he was little," he continued, "and that's what makes him come to the house now, whenever he gets loose. My wife got in the habit of feeding him salt, which all sheep like very much. I guess he must remember that. But Aunt Sarah wouldn't dare salt him now. Go back into the house, boys, and we men folks will look after the ram."

The sounds were nearer now:

"Baa! Baa! Baa!"

"Oh, he's coming!" cried Flossie, who stood with her nose pressed flat against a window near the porch.

"Had we better go in?" asked Bert of Harry.

"We really had," answered his cousin.

Uncle Daniel, Mr. Bobbsey and the hired man found some heavy sticks with which to scare the ram if he came too close. The big sheep was not yet in sight, though he could be heard bleating.

"Up this way," directed Uncle Daniel. "We can head him off and drive him into the barnyard, perhaps. Then I can shut him up until I have the fence mended that he knocked down."

"Why not get some salt for him?" suggested Mr. Bobbsey. "If he gets some to eat it may make him gentle, and then you could slip a rope around him and tie him up."

"That's a good idea!" cried the farmer. "Sam, please go to the house and get some salt," he directed.

Before the hired man returned, the ram had run into the driveway leading to the barn. Just as Uncle Daniel had said, the ram was headed for the house, which he must have remembered as a pleasant place ever since the days when he was a baby lamb. But now the ram was big and strong, and not very good-natured.

He stood for a moment, looking at Uncle Daniel, Mr. Bobbsey and the hired man. Then, pawing the ground with his fore feet, and lowering and shaking his head with its big horns, the ram started forward again.

"Oh, he's going to butt papa!" cried Flossie, who could see, from the window, what was going on.

"Papa will get out of the way, dear," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Don't worry."

On came the ram, and then Uncle Daniel, taking the salt from the hired man, scattered some of it on the ground in front of the big sheep.

"That will stop him, I think," said the farmer. And indeed it did. Sheep, and all cattle, are very fond of licking up salt from the ground, and they will go a long way to find it. It keeps cattle healthy. The old ram, as soon as he smelled the salt, began licking it up with his tongue.

He paid no more attention to the men standing in front of him, though if the salt had not been there he probably would have run at them, and knocked them down with his big curved horns.

"Now's our chance!" whispered Mr. Bobbsey, as if the ram could understand what was said. "Get a rope and we can tie him up."

"I'll get one," offered the hired man, and when he came back with the clothes line Uncle Daniel made a loop in one end, such as the cowboys on the Western plains make when they lasso cattle.

And while the ram was busy licking up the salt, Uncle Daniel tossed the noose of the rope around the sheep's head, and, in another second, he and Mr. Bobbsey pulled it tight.

"Oh, they've caught him! They've caught him!" cried Nan, who stood near Flossie at the window.

"Come on out and look at him!" said Bert.

"No, no!" objected his mother, as the two boy cousins started from the room.

"Oh, I guess there's no danger now, if they have a rope on him," said Aunt Sarah.

"I'll go 'long with you," offered Freddie, "and I'd squirt water on that ram from my fire engine--if I had it unpacked."

"You stay right here with me," advised his mother, putting her arms around him.

Bert and Harry went out to look at the captured ram. The animal was not ugly now. Perhaps the salt made him good-natured. And he was soon led away, and tied up in a stable until his pasture fence could be mended.

"My! What a lot of excitement!" exclaimed Nan, when it was all over. "Nothing like this happened when we were on the houseboat."

"You forget the make-believe ghost," said Harry, with a laugh, for he had helped solve that mystery.

"Oh, that's so," agreed Nan. "That was exciting for a while."

The Bobbsey twins, as well as their father and mother, to say nothing of Dinah, were so tired from their long railroad journey that they went to bed early that night. The sun was shining brightly when they awakened next morning. Harry and Bert slept in the same room, and when the country boy arose from bed he went to the window to look out.

"Oh, dear! The sun's shining!" he exclaimed.

"Well, isn't that a good thing?" Bert wanted to know.

"Maybe," admitted Harry. "But if it had been raining we might have gone fishing. As it is, I shall have to work."

"What doing?" Bert wanted to know.

"Help pick apples in the orchard. We are shipping them away this year, and they have to be picked, and packed in barrels."

"I'll help you," offered Bert, and, after breakfast, the two boys went out to the big orchard, where Uncle Daniel and some of his men already were busy.

The apples were picked by men standing on long ladders that reached up into the trees. Each filled a canvas bag with apples. These bags hung around their necks, and when one was full, the man came down the ladder with it. This was so the apples would not be bruised, for a bruised apple rots very quickly, and even one rotten apple in a barrel full, will soon make many bad ones.

"Can we pick apples on a ladder?" asked Bert.

"No, that's a little too dangerous for small boys," said Uncle Daniel. "But you and Harry may pick those you can reach from the ground. Some of the tree limbs are very low, and you won't have any trouble. Take some of the bags to put the apples in. Don't bruise them."

Harry and Bert were soon busy, picking off as many apples as they could reach. When their bags were filled, they emptied them carefully in a wooden bin, and from that bin Uncle Daniel sorted the apples into barrels, which were "headed up" ready to be taken to the city.

Nan had gone over to the home of Mabel Herold, the country girl, and Flossie and Freddie found many things to amuse them about the farm. Later on they came out to the orchard, and picked up apples from the ground.

"I'll help fill Bert's bag, and you can help Harry," said Freddie to Flossie.

"No, little fat fireman," said Harry, using the pet name his uncle called Freddie. "The apples on the ground are called 'windfalls.' The wind blows them down, and they get crushed and bruised by falling on the hard dirt, or stones. It would not do to put them in with the good hand-picked apples."

"But what do you do with all those on the ground?" asked Bert, for there were a great many of them.

"Send them to the cider-mill, or feed them to the pigs," said Harry. "The grunTERS and squeakers don't mind bruised apples."

The children spent nearly all day in the shady orchard, until Uncle Daniel said Bert and Harry had done enough work for the time.

"Then let's get our poles and go fishing," suggested Harry.

They did go, but got no bites. Harry said that morning was the best time to fish.

When Flossie and Freddie became tired of picking apples up from the ground, they found an old swing, and took turns in this, having lots of fun.

Snoop and Snap enjoyed their life in the country. Snoop did not go far from the house. There was another cat there, and the two soon became great friends. Snap also found other dogs with whom he could romp and play in the long meadow grass.

Mrs. Bobbsey and Aunt Sarah spent many hours talking over matters of interest to them, while Dinah, and Martha, who was Aunt Sarah's cook, spent most of their time in the kitchen, making good things to eat.

"'Cause dem chilluns suttinly does eat a turrible lot!" exclaimed Dinah, as she finished making several pies.

Picking the apples kept Uncle Daniel and his men busy for a number of days. Harry had to help, for everyone on a farm has to work, and Bert always lent his cousin a hand. But there were times when they were allowed a play-spell. Sometimes Tom Mason, another country boy, would come over, and, when the work was done, the three boys would go off to have good times together.

One or two days it rained, and then nothing could be done out of doors in the way of farm work. During one of the rainy days Bert and Harry went fishing.

"We'll be sure to get plenty of bites to-day," Harry said, as they started off with their poles and lines, well protected from the weather by rubber boots and coats.

"I hope we catch a lot of fish," said Bert.

But they caught only two little sun-fish, which Harry threw back into the creek, as they were too small to keep.

"I guess we'll have to wait for a sunny day," sighed Harry, as they started home. "I thought rain was good fishing-weather, but it doesn't seem to be."

"Never mind, we had a good time, anyhow," Bert answered.

When the two boys reached the farmhouse, they found Flossie, Freddie, Nan and Mabel Herold sitting in the dining-room, all talking at once, it seemed.

"And we'll take five baskets of lunch," Freddie was saying, "and my fire engine is unpacked now, so I can take that with us, and I'll squirt water on snakes and--and other things."

"Oh, snakes!" cried Mabel. "I hope we don't see any of the horrid things!"

"I'm not afraid!" boasted Freddie.

"Maybe there won't be any," suggested Nan.

"Well, I'm going to take my doll, anyhow," said Flossie.

"What's this all about?" asked Bert. "Are you going somewhere?"

"Picnic!" exclaimed Flossie. "We're going to have a picnic!"

"I'm going!" added Freddie, as though he was afraid of being left.

"We all are," added Nan.

"First I heard about it," Harry said, with a laugh.

"We planned it while you and Bert were off fishing," spoke his mother. "The children are going to take their lunch to the woods in a day or two, as soon as the weather clears."

A few days later the sun came out from behind the clouds, the rain ceased falling and with joyous shouts and laughter the Bobbsey twins, cousin Harry, and some country boys and girls, who had been invited, went off on a woodland picnic.

CHAPTER VIII

LOST IN THE HAY

"Oh, isn't it just lovely in the woods," sighed Nan, as she sat down on a green mossy seat beneath a great oak tree. "I could live here forever!"

"So could I!" exclaimed Mabel Herold. "There is no place so lovely as the woods."

"You--you wouldn't stay here all night, would you?" asked Freddie, as

he set down the basket of sandwiches he had been carrying, and looked at a dark hole under some bushes.

"I wouldn't mind," sighed Nan again. "It is so lovely here."

"I used to think I liked the seashore best," said Mabel, "but now I think the country is prettiest."

"Well, I'm not going to stay here all night," decided Freddie. "There--there's bugs--and--and--things!"

"I thought you weren't afraid of them," spoke Nan with a smile.

"I--I meant in daytime--I'm not afraid then," declared Freddie. "But at night, why--why, I'd rather be home in bed."

"And I guess we all would," exclaimed Nan, hugging the little fat fellow.

"Oh, there goes a rabbit!" cried Bert to Harry. "Let's see if we can catch him!"

"Come on!" agreed the country boy.

"I'm with you!" shouted Tom Mason.

"Oh, will they hurt the little bunny?" asked Flossie, with quivering lips, for she dearly loved all animals.

"I guess there isn't much danger of them catching the rabbit," said Mr. Bobbsey, sitting down beside his wife in a shady green spot. "A bunny can hop very fast."

And so it proved. The three boys raced about through the woods until they were quite tired, and very much heated up. But the rabbit got safely away.

"Ah, well, we didn't want him anyhow," said Harry, fanning himself with his cap, after the chase.

"No," agreed Bert, "we just wanted to see if we could get him."

"My! It's warm!" exclaimed Tom, looking at the basket in which the lemonade was packed in bottles. "I'm very thirsty," he said.

"You must not drink when you are too warm," advised Mr. Bobbsey. "Wait until you cool off a bit. If you take cold water, or icy lemonade, into your stomach after you are all heated up from running, you may be made ill. Rest a while before you drink, is good advice."

So the boys waited, and a little later they were allowed to have some of the cool lemonade.

"Are we going to eat our lunch here?" asked Freddie.

"No, a little farther on in the woods," said his Aunt Sarah.

So they walked on, under the shady trees, with the green carpet of

moss under foot, until they came to a little glade, where the trees grew in a circle about a grassy space.

"It--it's just like a circus ring!" exclaimed Freddie. "Oh, couldn't we have a circus, or a show, while we're here at the farm?" he asked.

"We'll see," half-promised his mother.

The table-cloth was spread out on the green grass, and the wooden plates set on it. Then the lunch baskets were opened and the good things passed around. There were sandwiches of several kinds, and cake and cookies, as well as more lemonade.

"Isn't it nice to eat this way?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey. "When we have finished, there are no dishes to wash; just the wooden plates to throw away."

"Yes'm," declared Dinah, with a chuckle. "I spects dish yeah would be a good way to do back home--but it would be kinder cold, eatin' out in de woods in de winter time."

"I wouldn't want to live here in winter," said Freddie. "There isn't any place to hang up your stocking Christmas, and no chimney for Santa Claus to come down!" he added.

"And that would never do!" laughed Mr. Bobbsey. "But we will enjoy these woods all we can."

When the woodland picnic lunch was finished, the party sat about on the grass, in the shade of the trees, and Mr. Bobbsey told stories to the two small children. Flossie and Freddie enjoyed this very much.

Nan and Mabel went for a little walk in the woods, and Bert and Harry said they were going to try for some fish, as they had brought hooks and lines along, and could cut poles in the woods. This time they had very good luck.

"I have one!" suddenly called Harry, pulling up his line. There was a flash, as of silver, in the air, and he hauled a fish up from the water, landing it flapping on the grass behind him.

"Oh, what a big one!" cried Bert, running over to look. "I wish I could get one now."

"Maybe you will," said Harry, trying to catch the flopping creature. "Put on some fresh bait." But Harry caught another fish before Bert had even a good bite.

By this time Mr. Bobbsey had finished his story, and Flossie had taken out her doll to pretend to get it to sleep. Freddie wandered over to where Bert and Harry were fishing.

"Oh, I have one! I have one!" Bert suddenly shouted, and he, too, landed a good-sized fish. It was taken off the hook, and strung on a willow twig, and then, fastened so it could not swim away, it was put back into the water to keep fresh until it was time to go home.

Freddie was very much interested in the captive fish. He went down to the edge of the creek to watch them as they tried to swim away. But

they could not, for the willow twigs held them.

Suddenly one of the fish gave a big jump in the shallow pool, where Bert had put them.

"Oh!" exclaimed Freddie, springing back. Then his foot slipped on a wet, mossy stone, and the next moment the little fellow fell down into the water.

"Bert!! Harry! Come and get me! I'm in!" he cried.

Bert and Harry dropped their poles and came up on the run, but there was no danger, for the water was only a few inches deep, near shore, and Freddie was already on his feet when they reached him.

"Oh! Oh!" sobbed the little fellow. "I--I'm all wet."

"Never mind, you have your old clothes on," said his brother. "And I'll tell mother it was an accident."

It was a warm summer day and a little wetting would not harm Freddie. He was taken back to a sunny place by Bert, and told to sit in the warm spot until he had dried out. Then the two larger boys went back to fish, but Freddie's accident must have scared all the fish away, for Bert and Harry caught no more.

"My, but you are a sight, Freddie!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey, when she saw the wet and muddy little twin. "But I suppose you could not help it."

"No, mamma," he answered. "The fish made me fall in."

It was almost time for the picnic party to start back home now. Dinah was packing up the knives, forks, and glasses, and throwing away the wooden plates.

As she knelt over to fold up the table-cloth, she felt something touch her back, and the next moment something cold and wet touched her cheek.

"Go 'long wif yo' now, Bert!" she exclaimed, not turning around. "Don't yo' put any ob dem wet slimy fish on me. Don't you do it!"

Then something almost pushed Dinah over, and again she felt the wet object on the back of her neck.

"Stop it! Stop it!" cried the colored cook. "Don't yo' put any toad down mah back, Bert!"

"I'm not doing anything," Bert answered, and at the sound of his voice Dinah looked up and saw him some distance off. At the same time, though, Bert and Harry burst into a laugh.

"Oh, look what Dinah thought was me!" cried Bert.

Dinah turned around, just as a loud "Moo!" sounded in her ear, making her jump.

"Good land ob massy!" she cried. "It's a cow!"

And, surely enough, so it was. The cow had wandered out of the woods, and, coming up behind Dinah, had licked her neck with a big red tongue. Perhaps the cow thought Dinah was a lump of black salt!

"Go 'way! Go 'long outer heah! Leef me be!" screamed Dinah, and catching up a handful of wooden plates she threw them at the cow. They rattled on the animal's horns, and then, with another "Moo!" the creature turned and crashed back through the bushes.

"And Dinah thought that was I, tickling her with a fish tail," said Bert, laughing.

"Dat's what I did, honey!" the colored cook said, with a laugh. "I s'pected yo' was up to some ob yo' all tricks!"

They all laughed at this, and amid much fun and jollity the picnic things were packed up and the homeward walk begun.

"Oh, we have had _such_ a good time!" sighed Nan. "I am sorry it is over."

"Oh, we'll have more good times," said Bert, as he and Harry walked along with the fish they had caught. Their chum, Tom Mason, had two smaller ones.

There were days of work and play on the farm, and Harry had his share of tasks to perform. Bert helped him all he could. One day, when the boys and girls had counted on going out rowing on a little lake not far from Meadow Brook, it rained. When they arose in the morning, ready for their fun, the big drops were splashing down.

"Oh, we can't go!" sighed Freddie. "I don't like rain!"

"I thought all firemen liked water," his father said, with a laugh.

"This is too much water!" went on the little chap. "We can't have any fun."

"Oh, yes, we can," said Harry. "We can go out in the barn and play in the hay. The big barn is full of new hay now, and we can slide down the mow and play hide and go seek in it."

"That will be great!" exclaimed Bert. "Come on."

Snap, the dog, must have thought he was also invited, for he ran out barking, with the children. Umbrellas kept the rain off them until they reached the barn, and then began a good time.

They went to the top of the big pile of fragrant hay in the mow, and slid down it to the barn floor, where a carpet of more hay made a soft place on which to fall. Snap slid with the rest, barking and wagging his tail every minute.

"Now let's play hide and go seek!" suggested Harry after a bit. "I'll 'blind' and when I say 'ready or not, I'm coming,' I'm going to start to find you."

The game began. Harry closed his eyes, so he would not see where the

others hid, and Nan, Bert and the rest of them picked out spots in the hay, and about the barn where they thought Harry could not see them. But Harry knew the old barn well, and he easily found Bert. Then he spied Nan and Flossie, hiding together. A little later he discovered where Tom Mason and Mabel Herold were.

"Now I've only to find Freddie," said the country cousin. But Freddie was not so easy to find. Harry looked all over but could not locate him.

"There are so many holes in the barn," the country boy said, "and Freddie is so small, that I guess I'd better give him up. I'll let him come in free. Give-up! Give-up!" he called. "Come on in free, Freddie."

But Freddie did not answer. They all kept quiet, but all they could hear was the patter of rain drops on the barn roof.

"Freddie! Freddie! Freddie! Where are you?" cried Nan.

"Come on in free!" added Harry.

"Come on, little fat fireman," went on Bert. "Harry won't tag you, and you can hide again."

But Freddie's childish voice did not reply. The boys and girls looked anxiously at one another.

"Where's Freddie?" asked Flossie, and her lips began to tremble as they did just before she started to cry.

"Oh, we'll find him," said Bert, easily.

"Yes, he's probably hiding so far off he can't hear us," went on Harry.

"Maybe he's lost under the hay," suggested Tom. "I read of a boy getting caught under a pile of hay once, and they didn't get him out for a long time."

"Oh, Freddie's lost! Freddie's lost!" cried Flossie, bursting into tears.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIVE-PIN SHOW.

"Hush, Flossie, don't cry, dear!" begged Nan, putting her arms around her little sister.

"But--but I--I can't help it," stammered Flossie. "Freddie's losted!"

"We'll find him!" said Bert. "He's somewhere inside the barn, that is sure. He'd never go out in all this rain," for the big drops were now coming down thick and fast.

"Freddie isn't afraid of water--he's a fireman--papa's little fat fireman, and I'm papa's little fat fairy, and Freddie's losted--and--and--oh, dear!" sobbed Flossie, as she thought of her missing brother.

"Come on, let's start in all together and find him," suggested Harry. "He must be hid somewhere around here."

"Away down under the hay," suggested Tom Mason.

"Hush! Don't say that," spoke Bert in a low tone. "You'll scare the girls!"

"Maybe we'd better go tell papa and mamma," said Nan.

"Let's try by ourselves, first," suggested her brother. "We'll find Freddie, never fear."

The children began a search of the barn, now almost filled with sweet-smelling hay. Up and down in the mow they looked to find where Freddie might have hidden himself away. They called and shouted to him, but no answer came.

"I don't see why he doesn't reply to us," said Nan to Bert. "He wouldn't keep quiet when we've told him he could come in free. Freddie is too fond of playing hide and go seek to stay away, unless he had to. I am afraid something has happened to him, Bert."

"What could happen to him?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know, but--" and Nan hesitated and looked worried.

Where could Freddie have hidden himself away in the hay, and stranger, still, why did he not answer the many calls made for him? For the children kept shouting as they searched.

Bert had made up his mind, after looking about for some time, that perhaps, after all, he had better go into the house and tell his father what had happened. Just then Tom Mason slid down from a high part of the haymow to a little hollowed-out place. As he landed, a crackling sound was heard, and then Tom cried:

"Oh, my! Now I have done it! Oh, dear! What a mess! Oh! Oh!"

"Have you found him? Is Freddie there?" asked Flossie from where she stood in the middle of the barn floor.

"No, but I slid right into a hen's nest, and I've broken all the eggs!" cried Tom. "Oh, me! Oh, my!"

He managed to get to his feet, and there he stood, his hands held out in front of him, for they were dripping with the whites and yolks of the broken eggs. Tom's clothes were pretty well splashed up.

"What a sight I am!" he murmured. "And I've broken all the eggs!"

"Never mind! You couldn't help it," said Harry kindly. "The old hen oughtn't to have laid her eggs in here, and they wouldn't have been smashed. Hens like to steal away, and lay their eggs in hay."

"Oh, but you do look _so_ funny!" cried Nan, then she laughed in spite of her worry about lost Freddie.

"He--he looks like a cake before it's baked!" giggled Mabel.

They all laughed heartily at Tom's sorry plight.

"Please lend me a handkerchief, somebody," he begged. "I can't reach in my pocket to get mine, and there's some egg running in my eye."

"I'll wipe it for you," offered Bert, laughing so heartily that he could hardly stand up.

"Hark! What's that?" suddenly asked Nan.

They all stopped laughing at once. From somewhere down in the hay, near the smashed nest of eggs, came a voice, asking:

"What's the matter? Isn't anybody going to find me?"

"It's Freddie!" cried Nan.

"Freddie!" shouted Bert. "Where are you?"

"Oh, Freddie is found! Freddie isn't lost any more!" exclaimed Flossie, jumping up and down in delight.

And then, from a little nest in the hay, crawled Freddie himself, rubbing his eyes, and pulling wisps from his tousled hair.

"Have you been there all the while?" asked Harry.

"I--I guess so," answered Freddie, as if he hardly knew himself.

"Well, then, why didn't you answer us?" asked Nan. "We were so frightened about you, Freddie. Why didn't you answer when we called?"

"I--I guess I was asleep," he said. "I didn't hear you until you all began to laugh. Then I woke up."

And that was what had happened. Freddie had found a good hiding place in a hole in the hay, and, while waiting for Harry to come and look for him, the little chap had dozed off, it was so warm and cozy in his hay-nest. And he had slept all through the search made for him, not hearing the calls. But when Tom rolled into the hen's nest, and the others laughed so heartily at him, that awakened the sleeping "little fat fireman."

"My! But you gave us a fright!" said Nan. "But it's all right now, dear," and she helped Freddie pull the hay out of his hair.

"I guess we've had enough of this game," suggested Harry. "Let's do something else."

"I'm hungry," announced Freddie. "Can't we play an eating game?"

"I think so," said Bert. "Dinah and Martha were starting to bake cookies before we came out to the barn, and they ought to be done now."

Let's go in."

Into the house, through the rain, tramped the children, and soon, eating cookies, they were telling about Freddie going to sleep in the hay, and Tom trying to make an omelet of himself in the hen's nest.

"Well, this certainly was a nice day, even if it did rain," said Nan, as they were ready to go to bed that night. "I wonder what we can do to-morrow?"

"I know," answered Bert. "Harry and I have a fine plan."

"Oh, tell me what it is," begged his sister.

"It's a secret," he laughed as he went upstairs.

After breakfast next morning Nan, who did not get up very early, looked for Harry and her brother.

"Where are the boys?" she asked her mother.

"Out in the barn," was the answer. "They took some big sheets of paper with them."

"They must be going to make kites," Nan said.

But when she saw what Bert and Harry were doing, she knew it was not a kite game they were planning. For in letters, made with a black stick on the sheets of paper, Nan read the words:

FIVE-PIN SHOW
COME ONE COME ALL

"Oh, what is it?" she cried. "Please tell me, Bert!"

"We're going to have a show," said Harry, "and we're going to charge five pins to come in."

"Oh, may I be in it?" asked Nan. "I'll do anything you want me to. Mayn't I be in it?"

"Shall we let her?" asked Bert of his country cousin.

"Sure," said Harry kindly. "We boys won't be enough. We'll have to have the girls."

"Where's it going to be?" asked Nan.

"Here in the barn," her brother said. "We're going to make a cage for Snap--he's going to be the lion."

"Can Snoop be one of the animals, too?" she inquired.

"Yes, Snoop will be the black tiger," decided Harry. "I only hope he keeps awake, and growls now and then. That will make it seem real."

"Snoop sometimes growls when he gets a piece of meat," suggested Nan.

"Then we'll give him meat in the show," decided Bert.

He and Harry finished making the show bills, and then began to get ready for the performance. With some old sheets they made a curtain across one corner of the barn, in front of the haymow. Nan helped with this, as she could use a needle, thread and thimble better than could the boys.

Then Tom Mason, Mabel Herold and some other of the country boys and girls came over, and they were allowed to be in the show. Bert was to be a clown, and he put on an old suit, turned inside out, and whitened his face with starch, which he begged from Martha.

Harry was to be the wild animal trainer, and show off the black tiger, which was Snoop, and the fierce lion in a cage, which lion was only Snap, the dog.

The show was not to take place until the next day, as Bert said the performers needed time for practice. But some of the "show bills" were fastened up about the village streets, and many boys and girls said they would come if they could get the five pins.

Finally all was ready for the little play. Flossie was made door-keeper and took up the admission pins. Freddie wanted to be a fireman in the show, so they let him do this. His mother made a little red coat for him, and he had his toy fire engine that pumped real water.

"But you mustn't squirt it on anyone in the audience," cautioned Bert.

"No, I'll just squirt it on the wild animals if they get bad," said the little fellow.

Nan was to be a bare-back rider, and Harry had made her a wooden steed from a saw-horse, with rope for reins. Nan perched herself up on the saw-horse, and pretended she was galloping about the ring.

A number of boys and girls came to the show, each one bringing the five pins, so that Flossie had many of them to stick on the cushion which was her cash-box.

Bert was very funny as a clown, and he turned somersaults in the hay. Once he landed on a hard place on the barn floor, and cried:

"Ouch!"

Everyone laughed at that, and they laughed harder when Bert made a funny face as he rubbed his sore elbow.

Harry exhibited Snoop and Snap as the wild animals, but Snoop rather spoiled the performance by not growling as a black tiger should.

"This tiger used to

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