

# THE SURPRISE AND THE BROKEN WINDOW

BY ELIZABETH EWING

IT WAS a surprise party, evidently. A jolly group of boys and girls, 20 in all, struggled up the fragrant hedge-lined street of the aristocratic college town, chatting and laughing in subdued merriment. It was a November evening, but the air was warm and pleasant. The girls' light dresses were the only gleams of color in the quiet darkness.

They, with the older boys, formed the front or vanguard of the procession, and they carried a number of boxes or packages with a care that betokened how highly their contests were esteemed. A few of the younger boys brought up the rear. They had, on starting out, been rather chagrined to find themselves ignominiously relegated to the background as it were.

Before they had gone far, however, a circumstance occurred which served to greatly restore their self-esteem and even add to the excitement of the occasion. They discovered that they were being shadowed—that their ranks were being harassed from the sides and rear by an unknown enemy. Three or four small boys who evidently thought this an excellent opportunity for paying off old scores, were following them up, skirmishing in and out of their ranks and administering sly punches where they thought they would be most effective. Sundry pulls and tugs at outer garments, with occasional remarks of an uncomplimentary nature, kept up a running accompaniment to their feet. A friendly electric light, however, soon revealed to the boys the identity of their youthful assailants.

"It's Whaley and Red Bronson and those kids," was passed from boy to boy.

"You wait till tomorrow, Red, I'll fix you!"

"You, too, Ted Whaley, you'll be sorry you're livin'."

These and other hints of what would happen on the morrow became so dark and blood curdling that the assailants subsided and finally melted away in the darkness.

The boys and girls in front, engrossed in their own affairs, were blissfully unconscious of any disorder in their rear. Presently they slackened their pace and made motions for silence as they approached a pretty bungalow with low, wide windows and a smooth green lawn in front. A softly shaded lamp revealed a young girl seated at the piano, her back toward the windows. She was practicing laboriously. One, two, three, four—one, two, three, four—she counted aloud. She wore a school dress of checked blue and white gingham, and her brown hair, tied at the neck with an immense bow of black ribbon, hung in two braids, girl fashion, to her waist.

The boys and girls crowded on tiptoe up the wide steps, breathless, giggling inaudibly, and peering in. One boy laughed aloud, but Nonie Carlisle, intent on her music, heard nothing.

"See her counting! Isn't it funny?" whispered a tall girl in white, with glossy brown braids, coronet fashion, over her brow.

"Look out for that freezer—don't bump it," growled one of the boys, sotto voce.

"Ring the bell, somebody, or I shall die," came in smothered tones from another. There was a prolonged peal at the bell. The music ceased abruptly and Nonie opened the door. Then the joyous crowd rushed in with a whoop, laughing and chatting, and Nonie stood dumfounded. It was certainly a complete surprise.

Lights were turned on. Nonie, assisted by a bevy of smiling girls, changed her school dress for a pretty white one. The young people gathered in the long, pleasant living room and the hubbub had scarcely subsided when there was a heavy thud at one of the windows and a large pane of glass shattered into a thousand pieces. The girls screamed faintly and gathered in a frightened group at the other end of the room. The boys, standing not upon the order of their going, jumped up and bolted for the street after the culprits. Nonie's mother, who had been assorting the goodly packages in the dining room, entered hurriedly and the girls nervously explained what had happened. After assuring herself that no one was hurt and that there was no danger of a repetition of the disaster, she sat down beside the girls to await developments.

Presently the lads returned, dragging with them three very unwilling and greatly frightened small boys.

"There was another, but he got away," said Stanley Harvey, one of the captors, breathless from his exertions.

Mrs. Carlisle gravely surveyed the youthful culprits. A keen student of human nature and of boy nature in particular, she judged from the girls' fragmentary information that the culprits, being very young, had deemed the act of window breaking a sort of retributive justice toward the other boys and that it was not a manifestation of their personal distaste for herself or her windows. Moreover, she was not minded to have the incident spoil her daughter's surprise party.

"Why did you break the window, boys?" she asked gently.

"Red" Bronson raised his curly red head and freckled little face. "It wasn't us did it. It was another feller



that got away," he said, half defiantly. Not for worlds would he let his captors think he was afraid. A smile hovered over Mrs. Carlisle's lips. She laid her hand on the boy's shoulder and drew him toward her.

"If I let you go now, will you all promise to come and see me tomorrow and bring the 'other feller' along?" she asked gently. The boy hesitated and looked sideways at his companions. But the soft hand on his shoulder reassured him a little.

"Yes, ma'am," he said at last, with downcast eyes.

"Honor bright?" she said, smiling.

"Yes, ma'am," he repeated firmly, while the other two nodded acquiescence.

"Then run along home now. But first, will you have a piece of cake?" she said calmly, ignoring the gasps of astonishment from the older children. She cut three generous slices from a large chocolate cake—one of the donations toward the supper—and with a significant "You owe it to them, boys," addressed to any the cap might fit, placed the pieces on a pretty platter and offered them to the bewildered culprits. They accepted the peace offering with shy smiles of wonder and delight. As they turned to go she stooped and said softly:

"Boys, I know you didn't mean to do it. I won't tell on you. Don't forget your promise."

No, ma'am. Thank you for the cake," said Teddy, the spokesman.

It was impossible to feel downhearted while munching a large piece of chocolate cake, and the boys talked volubly and excitedly on the way home.

As they passed a low stone coping covered with rose geraniums, a small head popped up cautiously above the flowers.

"Say, fellers," whispered the owner of the head.

"You can come along, Charlie," said Bobby White to his brother, who, by lying flat on the grass on the inner side of the coping, had managed to elude the vigilance of his pursuers. "They ain't chasin' us."

"You should have been with us. That lady was a peach. She gave us each a piece of chocolate cake," said Teddy Whaley. Charlie looked regretful.

"Did she say we had to pay for the 'window'?" he asked. The boys became thoughtful. That little item had escaped their attention for the time. Presently "Red" Bronson said: "I'm goin' to work for the butcher after school to help pay for it—you fellers goin' to pay, too?" interrogatively.

"My father 'ull pay," said Teddy Whaley, with a rather superior air. "I guess I'll get a lickin', though," he added reflectively.

"I got a quarter in my bank. Do you think my share'll be that much?" asked Charlie White.

"More," said Bob briefly. "But bring it with you to school tomorrow." Charlie looked depressed. He was only 8. It was trying to be deprived of a piece of chocolate cake and his cherished quarter at one fell swoop. When they parted for the night it was with the understanding that they should all meet at "Jonesey's" corner after school next day and go and see "the lady."

The next afternoon four small boys marched soberly up the steps of Nonie Carlisle's house.

Mrs. Carlisle herself opened the door. "Come in, boys," she said cheerfully. "Is this the 'other feller'?" she said, spying Charlie White's childish figure in his white blouse and sailor collar. "Oh, what a 'little fellow'—and her voice grew tender. Mrs. Carlisle had a weakness for children—small boys in particular. Charlie was the youngest but he was the moneyed man of the party. He held his cherished quarter in his moist little fist. In view of that

fact, he rather resented being called small.

"I'm up to him in school," he said manfully, nodding toward Teddy Whaley. Teddy's eyes dropped. Scholarship was not his strong point. Mrs. Carlisle smiled.

"Well, boys," she said, "I asked you

## ABOUT COMMON THINGS

### The Interesting Life Story of a Spool of Thread

**B**RIGHT boys have had a great deal to do in this world's history, and it is to a bright boy that we owe the beginning of thread making in the United States. Up to about 1786, all the thread making machines had been invented by Englishmen. At this time, two Scotchmen, brothers, made some machines at East Bridgewater, Mass., the first ones in the United States; but the English government would not allow the plans of the inventors to pass through the custom house, so the machinery was very crude. Here is where a bright boy came to the rescue.

There was a lad, Samuel Slater by name, who had worked among the flying spindles in the mills of England. Children are accustomed to work in these mills when very young. He was keen and quick and liked machinery, and every piece in a large factory was familiar to him. He heard people talking about the colonies, and how much trouble they were having trying to start thread mills in the new country. His busy brain worked out a scheme, and leaving his home in England, he sailed for New York, carrying the plans where the custom officials could not interfere with them—in his head. He reached New York safely, went right to the manufacturers and told them what he could do, and they had so much faith in him that they built a small mill at Pawtucket, then others at various places in Rhode Island, and they were a success. In 1813 there was built at Waltham, Mass., a mill which is believed to have been the first one in the world to make finished cloth from raw cotton. In 1822 the first cotton mill in Lowell, Mass., was built.

If you were to visit a thread mill today you would enter a large building, with clean, well lighted rooms. In each room is a machine intended to do a certain part of the work, and these machines are arranged along the floor in even, solid ranks, the wheels all spinning exactly alike. They seem almost human, as you watch them, and you feel as if they could do their work without any help from their tenders, and indeed, it is not unusual to see hundreds of machines all at work, and the room entirely deserted by attendants.

Thread is made of raw cotton which comes to the factory packed in great bales. The first thing is to give it a thorough cleaning, so it is fed to machines that beat out the seeds, stones and dirt which may have been left in at the gin where it was baled. These machines also pull the matted locks and wads to shreds and roll the cotton upon cylinders in a soft, downy roll. Before the thread can be twisted the fibers must all be laid parallel; this is done by a revolving cylinder with teeth—think of it, 90,000 of them to the square foot. It looks like a web of gossamer when it comes out of this machine, but it must go through another which they call an "eye" and comes out a narrow band about an inch in width, known as a "sliver." By this time the fiber has been so drawn out that one yard of

to come to see me today because we couldn't talk nice and comfy before the others last night. I want to know why you broke the window. Will you tell me, Teddy?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Teddy, raising his blue eyes. "We didn't mean to break it. It was only a lump of earth. We didn't think it would go through."

"Then you didn't throw a stone at the window? Oh, I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Carlisle joyfully.

"No, ma'am," said "Red," breaking in. "It was only a small lump of earth with some grass on it. We wanted to scare the fellers inside. Please, we want to pay for it," he added manfully. "Charlie's got a quarter and the rest of us 'ull bring ours next week."

"How will you get it?" inquired Mrs. Carlisle.

"My father gives me two bits a week," said Teddy Whaley.

"And I'm goin' errands for the butcher. He ast me to," said "Red."

Charlie White said nothing, but shyly handed his 25 cent piece to his brother.

"Charlie and me's got two bits now," said Bob with dignity.

Mrs. Carlisle surveyed them with satisfaction.

"Boys," she said earnestly, "I don't like to take your money, but I do like to see you so manly and honorable about it. I will pay half and you can pay the other half. Perhaps if I let you do that you'll remember that it is dangerous to throw even earth at a window hereafter. Now," she added, "I thank you for coming to see me and I am proud to be the friend of four such honorable boys." Then she took them in the dining room and gave them apples and cake. As they walked down the street a few minutes later Charlie White said in a burst of enthusiasm, "Fellers, I'm goin' to give Mrs. Carlisle my quarter anyway, even if my share isn't that much," and there was not a dissenting voice.

The original web has become 360 yards of "sliver" and it looks almost perfect, but if it were spun it would not make good thread. The fibers must be laid even, otherwise the thread will be thick and thin, and so useless; then any short fibers and remaining dirt must be removed, and the knots and kinks straightened out. Now we have the cotton in the form of yarn, and the real work of thread making begins.

You remember the rhyme

"When a twister atwisting would twist him a twist,  
To twist him a twist he three twines doth entwist."

You would think of this, for the yarn is doubled and twisted, then three of such yarns are twisted together. The skeins are now of a pale, dirty cream color—"in the gray," the workmen call it—and they must either be bleached or dyed. First, whether intended for white or colored thread, they are put into large steamtight iron tanks and boiled furiously six or seven hours. They come out of this boiling perfectly clean but still yellow, so they go into a bath of chloride of lime and come out as white as snow. The skeins intended for colored threads are then taken to the dye tanks.

Bleached and colored, the thread is now ready to wind from skeins on bobbins and then on the spools familiar to us. The automatic winding machines are ingenious little affairs that can be set to wind any given number of yards. The spools are fastened on pivots, the machine is set in motion and when the number of yards have been wound the spool stops whirling, so that it is impossible to wind more or less yards than desired. When the spool is filled an attendant cuts the thread, and also cuts the little nick in the spool, fastening the thread end in it. Then a special machine that works very rapidly puts the labels on both ends at once, the spools are packed in pasteboard boxes and the thread is ready to sell.

For ordinary use spool cotton is made in sizes ranging from No. 8 (coarse) to No. 200 (very fine). At first, these numbers indicated the size of the yarns from which the thread was twisted; for instance, No. 8 thread was made of three strands of No. 8 yarn. In numbering the yarn the size was denoted by the number of skeins, each containing 840 yards, required to weigh a pound. When one hank weighed a pound it was No. 1. When 50 hanks weighed a pound it was No. 50. But when sewing machines came into use a smoother, stronger thread was required, so six strands were used instead of three, the strands being twice as fine. The thread numbers were fixed, so they were not altered, though now No. 50 thread is formed of six No. 120 yarns instead of six No. 60 yarns.

Thread made of silk is called sewing silk, that made of flax is linen thread, but usually by a spool of thread we mean cotton thread. In the early days all the thread was made of flax, but now it is little used except for special work, making carpets, sewing books and in the saddlery and shoe industries. The regulation spool of thread is 200 yards.