

Billy glanced nonchalantly at her. "Don't you think, Aunt Minerva," he made answer, "I 's gittin' too big to go 'bout my shoes? I 's mos' ready to put on long pants, an' how'd I look, I'd just like to know, goin' round' bare-footed an' got on long breeches. I don't believe I 'll go barefooted no mo'—I'll just wear my shoes ev'ry day."

"I just believe you won't. Go take them off at once and hurry back to your dinner."

"Lemme jest wait till I eat," he begged, hoping to postpone the evil hour of exposure.

"No, go at once, and be sure and wash your hands."

Miss Minerva spied the paint the instant she made his second entrance and immediately inquired, "How did you get that paint on your feet?"

The little boy took his seat at the table and looked up at her with his sweet, attractive, winning smile.

"Paint pertec's little boys' feets," he said, "an' keeps 'em fom gittin' hurted. Aunt Minerva, don't it?"

Miss Minerva laid down her fork and her nephew her undivided attention.

"You have been getting into mischief again, I see, William; now tell me all about it. Are you afraid of me?"

"Yes, ma," was his prompt response, "an' I don't want to be put to bed neither. The major he would n't put little boys to bed day times."

She blushed and eyed him thoughtfully. She was making slow progress with the child, she knew, yet she still felt it her stern duty to be very strict with him and, having laid down certain rules to rear him by, she wished to adhere to them.

"William," she said after he had made a full confession, "I won't punish you this time for I know that Jimmy led you into it but—"

"Naw, Jimmy did n't. Me an' him an' Frances an' Lina's all 'sponsible, but I promise you, Aunt Minerva, not to clam' no mo' ladders."

CHAPTER XXII.

Pretending Reality. The chain-gang had been working in the street not far from Miss Minerva's house, and Lina, Frances, Billy and Jimmy had hung on her front fence for an hour, watching them with eager interest. The negroes were chained together in pairs, and guarded by two big, burly white men.

"Let's us play chain-gang," suggested Jimmy.

"Where we goin' to get a chain?" queried Billy; "I won't be no fun 'bout a lock an' chain."

"I can get the lock and chain off 'n Sarah Jane's cabin."

"Yo' name Jim, now you go to her cabin, and Billy."

"All right," agreed Lina. "Get the key, Billy, and we 'll be the chain-gang."

Billy put his right hand in his pocket but found no key there; he tried the other pocket with the same success; he felt in his blouse, he looked in his cap, he jumped up and down, he nearly shook himself to pieces all without avail: the key had disappeared as if by magic.

"I believe y' all done los' that key," concluded he.

"Maybe it dropped on the ground," said Frances.

They searched the yard over, but the key was not to be found.

"Well, if that ain't just like you, Billy," cried Jimmy, "you all time perposing to play chain-gang and you all time lose the key."

Lina grew indignant.

"You proposed this yourself, Jimmy Garner," she said; "we never would have thought of playing chain-gang but for you."

"It looks like we can't never do anything at all," moaned Frances, "thout grown folks 've got to know 'bout it."

"Yes, and laugh fit to pop themselves open," said her fellow-prisoner. "I can't never pass by Owen Gibbs and Len Hamner now 'thout they laugh just like idjlets and grin just like polecats."

"I ain't never hear tell of a pole-cat grinnin'," corrected Billy, "he jes smell worsen 'n what a billy goat do."

"It is Chessy cats that grin," explained Lina.

"Look like folks would get 'em a lot of pole-cats steard o' chillens always hanto be wearing assfetty bags 'round their nakes, so 's they can keep off whooping cough," said Frances.

"You can't wear a pole-cat roun' yo' nake," grinned Billy.

"And Len Hamner all time now asking me," Jimmy continued, "when I'm going to wear Sarah Jane's co'set to Sunday school. Grown folks 'bout the lunatickest things they is. Ain't you going to unlock this chain, Billy?" he demanded.

"What I got to unlock it with?" asked Billy.

As Jimmy's father was taking the crestfallen chain-gang to the blacksmith shop to have their fetters removed, they had to pass by the livery stable; and Sam Lamb, bent double with intoxicating mirth at their predicament, yelled:

"Lordee! Lordee! Y' all sho' is de outlandishest kids 'twixt de Bad Place an' de moon."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Transaction in Mumps. "Don't come near me," screamed Billy, snatching slowly and deliberately toward the dividing fence; "keep 'way fom me; they's ketchin'."

mumps. These received a contemptuous rejection.

"You can do peractly like you please when you got the mumps," insinuated Jimmy, who had seemingly allied himself with Billy as a partner in business; "grown folks bound to do what little boys want 'em to when you got the mumps."

Key increased his bid by the stub of a lead pencil, but it was not until he had parted with his most cherished pocket possessions that he was at last allowed to place a gentle finger on the protuberant cheek.

Two little girls with their baby-buggies were seen approaching.

"G' way from here, Frances, you and Lina," howled Jimmy. "Don't you come in here; me and Billy 's got the mumps and you-all 'r' little girls and ought n' to have 'em. Don't you come near us; they 're ketchin'."

The two little girls immediately opened the gate, crossed the yard, and stood in front of Billy. They inspected him with admiration; he bore their critical survey with affected unconcern and indifference, as befitted one who had attained such prominence.

"Don't tech 'em," he commanded, waving them off as he leaned gracefully against the fence.

"I teched 'em," boasted the younger boy. "What'll you all give us if we 'll let you put your finger on 'em?"

"I ain't a-goin' to charge little girls nothin'," said the gallant Billy, as he proffered his swollen jowl to each in turn.

A little darkey riding a big black horse was galloping by; Jimmy halted and halted him.

"You better go fast," he shrieked. "Me and Billy and Frances and Lina's got the mumps and you ain't got no business to have 'em 'cause you 're a nigger, and you better take your horse to the lib'ry stable 'cause he might ketch 'em, too."

The negro boy dismounted and hitched the horse to the fence. "I gotter little tarrapim—" he began in-suitingly.

And thus it came to pass that there was an epidemic of mumps in the little town of Covington, and William Green Hill grew rich in marbles, in tops, in strings, in toads, in chewing gum, and in many other things which comprise the pocket treasures of little boys.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

County Teachers' Examination.

A special examination will be held on Friday, January 12, 1912 for those desiring teachers' certificates, and those teaching without valid certificates.

This is a special concession by the State Board of Education, and those who fall to comply need not expect special favors, for the duty of the County Board is to carry out the law.

J. Herbert Haynsworth, Co. Supt. of Ed.

12-11-11aw-4w-1&V.

12-11-11aw-4w-1&V.

12-11-11aw-4w-1&V.

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Tax Returns for 1912.

Sumter, S. C., Dec. 11, 1911.—Notice is hereby given that I will attend in person or by deputy at the following places on the days indicated, respectively, for the purpose of receiving returns of personal property and poll taxes, for the fiscal year commencing January 1st, 1912.

All males between the ages of 18 and 55 years, must make returns as to whether or not they are liable for road duty for year 1912.

Tindal, Tuesday, Jan. 2. Privateer Station, Wednesday, January 3.

Manchester, Lev's Siding, Thursday, January 4. Wedgefield, Thomas' Store, Friday, January 5.

Claremont Station, Tuesday, Jan. 9.

Hagood, Wednesday, Jan. 10. Remberts, Thursday, Jan. 11. Dalsell, Friday, Jan. 12.

W. T. Brogdon's Store, Monday, Jan. 15. Mayesville (Barnett's Store), Tuesday, Jan. 16.

Pleasant Grove, Wednesday, Jan. 17. Shiloh, Thursday, Jan. 18.

Norwood, Cross Roads, Friday, Jan. 19.

Oswego, Monday, Jan. 21.

All persons, whose duty it is to make returns, should be prompt to meet at those appointments. All returns must be made before Feb. 20, 1912.

R. E. WILDER, Auditor.

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L. D. NETTLES, Local Agent and Traveling Representative SUMTER, S. C.



"My mama don't care if I just borra a lock and chain; so I'm going to get it."

"I'm going to be the perlice of the gang," said Frances.

"Perlice nothing. You all time talking 'bout you going to be a perlice," scoffed Jimmy. "I'm going to be the perlice myself."

"No, you are not," interposed Lina, firmly. "Billy and I are the tallest and we are going to be the guards, and you and Frances must be the prisoners."

"Well, I ain't going to play 'thout I can be the boss of the niggers. It 's Sarah Jane's chain and she 's my mama's cook, and I'm going to be what I please."

"I'll tell you what do," was Billy's suggestion, "we'll take it turn about; me an' Lina 'll first be the perlice an' y' all be the chain-gang, an' then we 'll be the niggers an' y' all be the bosses."

This arrangement was satisfactory, so the younger boy climbed the fence and soon returned with a short chain and padlock.

Billy chained Jimmy and Frances together by two round, fat ankles and put the key to the lock in his pocket.

"We must decide what crimes they have committed," said Lina.

"Frances done got 'rested for shootin' craps an' Jimmy done got 'rested for 'sturbin' public worship," said the other boss.

"Naw, I ain't neither," objected the male member of the chain-gang, "I done cut my woman with a razor 'cause I see her racking down the street like a proud c'on with another gent, like what Sarah Jane's brother telled me he done at the picnic."

The children played happily together for half an hour, Billy and Lina commanding, and the prisoners, entering thoroughly into the spirit of the game, according prompt obedience to their bosses. At last the captives wearied of their role and clamored for an exchange of parts.

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Send us your job work.