

LITTLE LASSES AND LADS

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Little Lasses and Lads by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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CHAPTER I.

RYE FARM.



RCHIE, you'd better put your bricks back into the box; you won't have time to play with them any more, for I heard papa say, just now, that he was going to order the carriage directly, and we must all be ready in half an hour. Don't you hear me?" repeated little Florence Cooper, peremptorily, seeing that her words produced no impression on her brother, who continued as intent on the erection of a very tall brick tower, as if she had never spoken.

"Don't you hear me?" repeated the little girl, impatiently. "Mamma said we were to get ready at once."

"I'm not going out to-day," was all Archie's reply, "so I needn't get ready."

"Not going out!" exclaimed his sister. "Oh! you mean because of your cold; but we can't help that now, we've all got to go. Don't you know mamma's had a letter from Sissy's governess, to say she's going to bring her home, because she thinks she's got the scarlet fever, and so we three, May, and you, and I, are to go away, for fear we should take it too? That's why papa's ordered the carriage."

This piece of news was sufficiently interesting to draw Master Archie's attention away from his dear bricks. He thrust out his sturdy leg, and demolished his grand tower in a moment, then picking himself up off the floor, he inquired, anxiously, where they were going to.

"Oh, to Nurse Edwards; won't it be fun?" said Florrie, eagerly.

"No," replied the little fellow, resolutely, "I stay at 'ome."

"Oh, but you can't; you'll get the fever too, and perhaps you'd die," urged Florrie, earnestly.

“No, I shan’t. I’ll stay at ’ome,” persisted Archie. “You and May go; I’ll stay.”

Florrie was about to expostulate further, and urge other arguments, when Mrs. Cooper made her appearance, and was speedily informed by the little girl of Archie’s wish to stay at home.

“Unfortunately you can’t, Archie,” said his mamma, turning towards him. “Papa says you must all go; and though we don’t like it at all, there is nothing else to be done, and it is very kind of Nurse to say she will have you.”

Archie pouted, and rubbed his fingers into the corners of his eyes to try to make some tears come; but as they were very tiresome, and would not make their appearance, he tried another plan, and began to coax his mamma to let him stay with her. The fact was, Master Archie was not fond of new friends, and the thought of living with Nurse’s husband and niece, made him feel very shy. But Mrs. Cooper had no time to listen to his complaints and entreaties, she was busy packing up the children’s clothes; and by the time that was done, and their walking things put on, the

carriage and papa were ready to take them to Nurse Edwards.

May and Florrie were too much pleased at the idea of going to stay with their old nurse to feel very sorry at parting with their mamma; but they grew sober and grave when they saw with what an anxious, troubled expression she watched them drive away; she was thinking of the sick child whom she was expecting, more than of the healthy merry little ones she was sending away.

Nurse Edwards, as the children called her, had lived in Mrs. Cooper's family till about six months before this story begins, when she had married and gone to live with her husband at a small farm, about eight miles from the town where they resided. Whenever she came into the town on market days, she always came to have a peep at her little ones, as she still called them; but though they had seen her many times since her marriage, they had never seen her home. It was the prospect of doing this, and of living in a "real farm-house," that had so delighted May and Florence; but Archie, whose ideas of a farm-house were

mostly derived from a toy one he possessed, did not look forward to enjoying himself so much.

However, he was very fond of sitting by his papa's side on the box of the waggonette, and before they had reached their destination he was in as high spirits as his sisters. His shyness returned a little as they drew up in front of the house, and Nurse's husband came out to meet them and help them out. If he had dared, he would have refused to let the good farmer carry him into the farm kitchen; but though he would have liked to kick and scream, he was afraid to do so lest Nurse should be shocked, and, besides, Farmer Edwards was such a very big man that Archie felt as if it would be of no use to kick *him*, he would hardly feel it, especially as Archie had not his very thick pair of boots on. So in a state of mingled awe and shyness our young friend made his entry into Nurse's home, which was a very different place to what he had imagined. But May and Florrie were in ecstasies with everything—with the farmhouse itself, with the great haystacks adjoining it, and, above all, with the many live creatures that

seemed only too ready to form intimate friendships with them. Fortunately, none of the three children were in the least afraid of horses, cows, or dogs, and no sooner had they said good-bye to their papa, and watched him drive away, than they were clamorous to go out and see everything. But Nurse said they must have their dinner first, for she was sure their long drive must have made them hungry. So they sat down to dinner in the kitchen, which Archie and Florrie thought very funny. May coloured very much when she heard them say this, and tried hard to give Florrie a kick under the table, as a hint that such remarks were rude, and might vex dear Nursie ; but the table was wide, and poor May's legs were very short, so she was forced to give up the attempt, and trust to Nurse's good-nature to forgive her little brother's and sister's rudeness.

There was not much need to fear that she would be offended by anything her darlings might do ; she was so pleased to have them all under her wing again, that I verily believe she would have given them anything they asked. And, indeed, when

Farmer Edwards met them half an hour afterwards making the round of the premises, he said he thought it was a good thing he had found them, or his wife would have given away all his property before tea-time. And no wonder the good man was alarmed, for at the moment he discovered them, Archie was exclaiming, "Nurse, Nurse, the white hen shall be mine, and the big brown one with the trousers shall be May's, and Florrie can have those two pretty ducks." And Florrie was protesting, "No, Nurse, you said I might have the white hen, didn't you?" and Mrs. Edwards was turning from one to the other with a beaming smile, saying, "Yes, dear, you shall have which you like, there are some more white ones, so you can have one apiece, if you like them best."

Nor was it only hens and ducks that the children were begging of their indulgent nurse. Florrie had already bargained for leave to pick as many flowers as she liked, and Archie had inquired anxiously whether there were any ripe strawberries in the garden.

But here the good farmer interposed. "Give