



Boyhood  
in a Parsonage

BY PAUL E. KRETZMANN



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When I grow up, I'm going to be a driver of a coach.

BOYHOOD  
IN A PARSONAGE

SKETCHES FROM MANY SOURCES  
NEAR AND FAR

BY

PAUL E. KRETZMANN



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## BOYHOOD IN A PARSONAGE

### Chapter 1. FOND MEMORIES OF INFANCY

It was a happy crowd of romping youngsters that lived in the old rambling parsonage not far from the rolling Ohio. The two girls who were at that time trying to hold their own against four brothers had a rather hard time of it, for they were hopelessly in the minority in both numbers and strength. Nevertheless they joined in all the good times that were to be had, and were even known to take the lead in some prank.

But the boys were both the light rays and the thunderbolts of the household, as Grandma used to say, and they certainly saw to it that life in the old parsonage was not lacking for variety. There was Tommy, the oldest, called by dignified Aunt Susan Thomas, a tow-top of the carrot variety, with foolish ideas chasing one another under his reddish shock with fierce rapidity. There was Willie, who favored his maternal grandmother in a darker complexion and in a shock of unruly black hair, much more sedate in manner than the Nordic type. There was Jimmie, another specimen on the fair type roly-poly and generally good-natured, short and stocky for a longer time than is usually permitted to youngsters approaching the school age. And there was little Ned, still too small to get into much mischief, but willing enough to be dragged along for any sort of escapade. A healthy, happy, and mischievous band it was, all of whom contributed their share in saving the neighborhood from dry-rot.

How could one ever forget the old-fashioned parsonage nestling beneath the proud elms and the wide maples? It had nothing of the proud beauty of the modern bungalow; there were no built-in china-closets and book-cases and electrical devices and what-nots. The hall was draughty and the windows rattled, and there were other defects which would have filled a modern apartment-dweller with nameless dread and horror. But the rooms were large and high-ceilinged, and there were many cozy nooks where one could snuggle down when the rain splashed against the

frame walls and the wind moaned in the chimney and the autumn leaves scurried along the garden path. It was a house to live in, to dream in, to grow in – and the parsonage children did, all three with a right cheerful will.

Nor dare we forget the garden which flanked the rambling structure. It was no fancy florist's paradise; it was not constructed according to the latest fad of the most up-to-date woman's magazine. No exotic flowers lifted their strange heads in serried ranks, nor did the bushes that lined the side carry with them the danger of foreign pests. But zinnias and phlox, in a riot of color, bloomed from early summer till late in the fall, and dahlias and asters added a rich profusion to the general effect, while the lilac bushes filled the early spring days with their rich fragrance and fox-tails flamed when the season was at its height.

Naturally, beauty was combined with usefulness in the old parsonage garden. Old-fashioned flowers are interesting enough in their way, but they will hardly do to feed hungry mouths, and here were six of them clamoring for food practically from morning to night. And so the old garden went through the annual miracle for the benefit of the parsonage youngsters. As early as the middle of March the hotbeds showed beautiful rows of radishes lettuce. Somewhat later the open ground was filled with delicate sprouts of the various radishes, as well as carrots, peas, beans, and the other stock vegetables, and it was not long before the rich strength of the garden products brought the glow of perfect health to six pair of cheeks gathered about the family board.

Nowhere else were there such appetites as in the parsonage on the pike. Mother did not believe in fancy dishes, but she was an excellent cook of ordinary fare, and she saw to it that every one of the children received its share of wholesome food. Nor was there any choice daintiness noticeable at the table. Every one of the children, even little Ned, received a portion, great or small, as necessity required. But what was served was also eaten, for the food must not be wasted, and there was no room for a sweet-tooth at the parsonage table. Perhaps the father had read the statement of Franklin concerning the training given him by his parents, or it may be that both parents had enough common sense to choose the right

thing to do. In any event, there was no discussing of likes and dislikes; in fact, there was no debating of the merits of the food, except as approval was shown in the rapidity with which heaps of potatoes and corn bread disappeared from the plates. And the children were better for this almost Spartan training.

However, two exceptions much be registered at this point, one with regard to potato pancakes and the other with respect to potato dumplings. If the parsonage mother wanted to have an almost angel-like meekness on the part of every one of the half dozen, or if she desired to have the Saturday's work out of the way before ten o'clock, she had but casually to mention that she was seriously considering the one or the other of these perfectly delectable dishes. There may be some difference of opinion concerning the giving of rewards for good behavior, and this difference of opinion may wax especially warm with regard to promises made in advance, but there surely was no question about the practical working scheme in this particular home.

The results of the healthy way of living were always in evidence, often distressing so, for the children grew and expanded like the proverbial weeds. To buy new clothes for the entire half-dozen was just as much out of the question as a trip to the Holy Land. The girls somehow managed to get quite a few clothes given to them. Just how the parsonage mother managed with the boys has always been a mystery. Of course, there were the minister's old suits, and particularly his trousers. It seems that the goods formerly used for men's suits was decidedly more durable than that which is now offered for sale for five times the price. So much is sure that the seamstress of the house, who was identical with the cook, managed to make some boys' trousers from the discarded suits of the head of the house. When Tommie had outgrown them, they were passed on to Willie; then Jimmie grew into them, and sometimes they lasted till Ned had reached the required length. It was a miracle which was discussed more than once at a solemn meeting in the back yard, the children coming to the most satisfying conclusion that the clothes were much like the five loaves of the boy in the Gospel story, since they reached so far, or possibly like the clothes of the children of Israel in the wilderness journey, which lasted and lasted without renewal.

Not far from the parsonage stood the brick church, an imposing building for a country congregation, and one which was always regarded with due reverence by the parsonage youngsters. Perhaps some of their awe was due to the fact that the cemetery was very close to the church, some of the ancient headstones coming up to within fifteen feet of the vestry entrance. And had not Carrie, the neighbor's big girl, who sometimes came over to help with the annual house-cleaning, declared that she had seen a ghost flit across the cemetery one moonlight night?

The interior of the church was simple and dignified, as befitted a house of God where the old Gospel was preached with simple eloquence. The pews were certainly not very comfortable, at least not to a degree which invited naps in church, although it would happen time and again that some little flaxen head would sink over to one side, an act which was soon followed by a rhythmic breathing that sometimes rose to the dignity of a gentle snoring, unless mother could reach the culprit first.

The parsonage children were trained to pay close attention in church. Mother was an attentive listener herself, and she insisted upon molding the children's minds just as soon as there was any evidence of understanding and memory. Many a Sunday noon heard a conversation in kitchen or at the dinner table.

"Tommy, can you tell me what the sermon was about today?"

"About the miracle at Cana."

"Who performed the miracle of Cana, Willie?"

"The Lord Jesus."

"Can you tell me some of the story, Jimmie?"

Now Jimmie at first had a hard time keeping his mind centered upon the sermon, for there were so many things to be seen and heard in church, if he did not quietly doze off; but he soon learned to give his answers like a little man, to the great delight of this oldest sister, who otherwise loved to boss him around.

There was one Bible story that impressed little Jimmie with particular force, and that was the account of the Three Men in the

Fiery Furnace. Somehow, the description of the furnace and the courage of the three believers had caught his fancy, or it may have been that the fact of a strange preacher had something to do with the phenomenon. Certain it was that he soon found the picture in the Bible History of some of the older children, and thereafter he did not grow tired of telling the story over and over again, often with details and variations which were not in very close agreement with the inspired narrative. He would get upon a footstool, making the baby's high-chair his pulpit, and then he would hold forth for hours, until he was too tired to continue or until one of the brothers suggested some other game.

The special delight of the parsonage children was the barnyard. It was flanked on the side by the chicken-run, and Jimmie took a particular delight in watching the proud rooster as he led the members of his harem out to the dung-heap, calling to the more favored wives with a chuckling noise whenever he found an unusually fine morsel. There was not quite so much fun in being chased by an angry hen in the spring, when the little tow-top came too close to her little band of peeping youngsters. It always remained a mystery to the little fellow how that contented brooding cluck could, in one moment of time, be changed into a very demon of fury in defending her family. On the other side of the barnyard was the stable, not very large, to be sure, such as that of Farmer Stewart, who lived next door, but full of romantic hiding-places, nevertheless. Above the stalls for the cow and the two ponies was the hayloft, which offered the finest hiding-places in the world, especially in the fall, when the sweet-smelling hay reached up to the very rafters where the swallows built their clay nests and where a small colony of hornets occasionally found lodgment.

Jimmy was not very much interested in the ponies, but rather stood in awe of them, for they had a way of rearing and plunging about in the barnyard which made them seem rather dangerous, though they were meek enough when they were harnessed and still more meek when they were to draw the two-seated buggy to town for a fresh supply of groceries. The cow was gentle enough when she was in her stall, especially when her head was firmly held in place by the strong stanchions, but she had a most unpleasant way about her when she had a calf, and she would

have occasional attacks of peculiar playfulness when she was out in the barnyard. She also developed a strange fondness for rags, and whenever there was any piece of cloth within reach she was sure to get it. One morning Tommy had been making experiments in climbing various sections of the barnyard fence, becoming so excited in this pastime as to forget everything else about him. Suddenly the mother of the parsonage was called to the door of the kitchen by a terrible screaming. There was Tommy, sitting on the top rail of the fence, hanging on for dear life, while bossy had a firm hold of the seat of his diminutive trousers, pulling away as hard as she could, in order to have her coveted tidbit. It was only by the application of considerable force that the poor boy could be rescued from his unfortunate position. Somehow this incident caused Tommy to develop a great measure of respect for her bovine majesty.

Beyond the barnyard was the pasture, a few acres of meadow-land, which was sufficient for the cow during the entire summer season and served also the ponies, especially on their infrequent holidays. In a far corner of the pasture was a slight hollow, commonly called a gully by the imaginative children. On its edge were the crumbling ruins of an old cellar, for there had formerly been a small stable serving a more remote meadow. Of course, the children soon had this part of the pasture filled with products of their lively imagination. A band of Indians had, many years before, made a raid on the settlement near by, and failing in their attempt to capture the town, they had burned the houses of the settlers, unprotected as they were. This story sometimes grew to horrifying proportions, especially when the older children wanted to impress the youngsters who were not yet of school age.

Near the old ruin was another interesting spot, one guarded with anxious jealousy by all the parsonage children. It was inevitable that they should all be familiar with the ceremonies of funerals, for they were witnesses of practically every interment that took place on the church cemetery, Naturally, also, they were all of an imitative bent. Now it happened occasionally that the one or the other doll of the sisters suffered a horrible death, usually by being decapitated or by having its porcelain head smashed in one of the tragedies of childhood. But there was an unwritten law that dolls

must not be buried, no matter in what condition they might be, for it always happened that the most battered doll turned up at Christmas time in full repair and with new clothes. But this rule did not apply to the smaller domestic animals, and therefore both kittens and chickens were duly buried in a little cemetery out on the edge of the meadow. Every funeral was conducted with the greatest dignity, for every sign of levity was frowned upon by Tommy, who usually officiated at these functions. Only once was the dignity of the procession scattered to the winds, namely, when a snake suddenly chose to come along the path leading to the burial ground. The pet that was on the way to its grave was hurriedly dropped, while the mourners fled in every direction.

Of all the exciting thing that happened to link the parsonage children with the great world outside there was one that stands out in all their memories, and that was the passing of the mail-coach on its daily trips between the metropolis on the east and the smaller city on the west, at that time without a railroad. Jimmy particularly, not having anything important to occupy his time while he was not yet attending school, hardly ever failed to run out to the front fence, in order to see the driver proudly sitting top of the coach and urging his horses on to a gallop. Very likely the worthy jehu enjoyed the admiration of the parsonage children, for he would never fail to crack his whip and to call to his horses until a cloud of dust hid him and his ramshackle coach from the eyes of Jimmy and Ned.

“When I grow up, I’m going to be a driver of a coach,” Jimmy would proudly announce.

And Ned, hardly big enough to form words properly, would nevertheless utter the supreme desire of his little heart: “Me too, me too!” he would say. And then the old saw-horse would be pressed into service to act as a substitute, for the time being, until Jimmy might be sitting on the coach of his dreams.

## Chapter 2. NEW SCENES AND A NEW PARSONAGE

Jimmy was not old enough yet to go to school, while little Ned was just finding his way about with some degree of safety when an event occurred which threatened to upset their equilibrium completely. For some time there had been serious deliberations held in the study of the parsonage, and both the pastor and his wife seemed rather worried about some grave matter. The children, well-bred as they were, did not dare to ask what it was all about.

The neighbor's children were the first to bring some enlightenment into the uncertainty of the situation.

"Do you know," said the oldest boy of the teacher, "that your father has a call? There's a great big congregation far away that wants him as their preacher, and the people are all worried that he will leave here."

So that was the meaning of all the meetings that had been held lately, when the men of the congregation tied their horses to the old hitching-rack with such deliberate slowness, smoked their pipes, knocked out the remaining ashes, and then slowly walked over to the school-house, where the meetings were held.

Jimmie pondered the information which he had received. He wondered what it meant for his father to get a call, and how that call might affect their life in this beautiful country. He discussed the matter quite gravely with Ned, but that little scamp gave him small satisfaction, being engaged, about that time, in the devouring of an immense piece of jelly-bread.

Jimmy concluded that Ned was a materialist and had no concerns with the greater things in life. So he went out and climbed to his favorite perch, a corner of the fence near the barn, where he had a view of the entire place and particularly of the kitchen door, a fact which enabled him to make use of the signs of the times as he found occasion. If all signs were favorable, and especially if the summons to a meal was to be expected, he could very quickly slide

down the near side and trot over to the promised treat. But if he had been into mischief and might expect some form of punishment, he could just as easily slide down on the far side of the fence and hide behind the barn until peace had once more descended on the home of his youth.

It was on this perch that Jimmie sat with the problem of the meaning of a pastor's call. He would have discussed the matter with the older boys, but they were not available just then, Tommy having gone to the store and Willie being busy with some school work. Jimmie felt that the people who could call his father from a city far away must have some pretty loud voices, for otherwise they could hardly make themselves understood. And there was another question: How did those people have any business calling his father? Why, father was not a little boy whom people could call so that he had to come; he was a big man! The situation did not seem to fit at all into Jimmie's philosophy of life; but he promptly forgot about the problem when he was summoned to supper.

A few days later the parsonage mother made the solemn announcement: "In just a few weeks we are going to leave here and move to a big city."

The children looked at one another, solemn as owls. The older boys had evidently talked over the possibility from various angles, for they soon found their tongues and plied their mother with questions.

"How far is it to Western City, mother?" "Will it take long to get there?"

Jimmie sat as still as a mouse; he was trying to adjust himself to new situations, and he made up his mind that he would ask his questions of mother alone, for she was sure to understand. The older boys, and the girls, too, at least once in a while, teased him unmercifully when he made some remark which they considered foolish. Mother was different. She would take a fellow by the hand and turn up his face with the most serious question imaginable: "What is sonny thinking about now?"

It was now the late fall of the year. The hills along the Ohio were brown and sere. The last goldenrods were blooming along the

pike, and mother's asters were in full bloom. Occasionally a light frost gave the true autumn tang to the air, and the ducks were flying southward in large flocks. Somehow the business of packing up under such circumstances had a somewhat melancholy aspect. One by one the old, familiar things were brought out, to be wrapped up and even boxed for shipping. Father's long rows of books were carefully placed in big boxes.

Then came the day when men came with big lumber wagons and hauled off everything that was in the house to the railroad station, where it was to be loaded in freight cars, as Brother Tommy said.

"What is a freight car?" asked Jimmy.

"Why, you little dummy, don't you even know that?" teased Tommy in the consciousness of his superior knowledge. To be sure, he didn't know himself, but he was almost ten years old, and he felt that the world held little that he did not know.

It was rather jolly to stay at the home of several neighbors for almost a week. There was so much to see and so many good things to enjoy by way of eating and drinking that Jimmy had no time for philosophical reflections. He could not understand why so many of the women who called to see his mother cried when they went away, but he decided that this was the way of older people, and little boys are not expected to understand everything.

But finally the last farewells were said, the last tears were shed, and they were all in the train which was to carry them to the big city. It was the first time that Jimmy had ever been in a train, and he was duly impressed with the rush and roar of the big engine with its long string of cars. All too soon the journey was at an end, and the train stopped in an immense depot, where thousands of people were hurrying back and forth, and poor little Jimmy could hardly catch his breath. They were in the big city.

Then came another period of excitement, for the pastor moved into a new home with his family. This was not really a parsonage, for the house did not belong to the congregation. And yet, it served as a parsonage for many years, in fact, as long as Jimmie was at home. Moreover, it was regarded as the parsonage

even by the members of the congregation. Since most of the people lived at the very edge of the big city at that time, the dirt and the soot of the factory district was not quite so oppressive during the first years as it became later on, when the city moved southward with astonishing rapidity.

It was a wonderful place, a big frame building well adapted for the needs of a large and growing minister's family. The front door opened on a large hall which contained the stairway leading upstairs. To the left of the hall was the living-room, or the parlor, as it was then called. This was forbidden ground, for the most part, but Jimmie soon discovered that there was a fine place under the big square piano, where a little body could squeeze in and remain undiscovered for hours.

The hall led directly into the family sitting-room, one of the coziest places in the whole house. During the day the fine large windows gave plenty of light, and in the evening an old-fashioned hanging-lamp furnished all the illumination which was necessary for the many heads bent over school books. In winter an immense base burner spread a genial warmth throughout the large room, even as far as the couch, which stood conveniently near one of the large windows. The couch was a much-coveted place, especially when a new magazine had come in and the whole family wanted to read it at the same time. In winter the parsonage mother often found the solution of the problem by having one of the children read aloud from the favorite family journal.

Off the sitting room was mother's room, a large boudoir with an alcove, used especially during the winter months when children's diseases passed through the family, and sometimes, alas! also when the queen of the household lay ill for months with some serious disease. The clothes closet off the alcove in this part of the house was quite the finest place that one could imagine, for it was roomy enough for various trunks and chests, and, strange to say, it had a window, an arrangement which made it possible for one to escape to its sheltering snugness and there to read for hours before a voice from some remote distance would call for dinner or supper.

A special dining-room was not necessary in the new parsonage, for the kitchen afforded room enough and to spare. Even

when the entire family was seated at the table (not a small number in the years that followed), none was too near to the old-fashioned oven and heater combined to be uncomfortable. Everything was so convenient, for on the one side was the pantry, in another corner was the door leading to mother's room, and next to the stove was the door leading into the summer kitchen.

Few people nowadays have any idea of the convenience of an old-fashioned summer kitchen. It was really remarkable how many purposes were served in that lean-to. Here were the clothes-hampers, for the room served as the laundry for more than ten months in the year. Here, also, the annual sausage-festival took place, for the mother of the household never did get away from the economical way of purchasing meat wholesale and then making the sausage for the winter-months. The summer kitchen served as the children's playground when the weather was unpleasant, and many an exciting game was invented and played under its crude shelter. Nor did Jimmie ever forget the time when a big rat from the neighbor's barn found its way into the summer kitchen one day. Since the house cat was promptly vanquished by the fierce beast, Jimmie was delegated to kill the rat, but he succeeded in doing so only after chasing it for more than a half-hour and almost getting out of breath in the effort.

The kitchen and the summer kitchen were interesting also for other reasons. This was before the day of bathing rooms and open plumbing. Every Saturday evening, therefore, tub-night was celebrated in the kitchen, and one of the youngsters after the other climbed in to the large wash-tub of the family laundry, while mother supervised the operations and guaranteed results. A few years later, a makeshift bath-room was built at one end of the summer kitchen, but this could not be used for bathing in cold weather, since the room was not plastered.

The second story of the parsonage was almost as interesting as the first. The front room was the study. It was right at the head of the stairs, and could therefore be most easily reached by anyone who wished to see the pastor. All along one side were the books which were in constant use. In a small alcove above the lower hall was a couch where the pastor might take an after-dinner nap. This

part of the house was sacred to the work of the ministry, and it was only seldom that any of the children were there found, except when they were summoned to be sent on an errand. The rest of the second floor was occupied by bed-rooms.

Jimmie soon decided that the outside of the house and its surroundings were at least as interesting as the house itself. In the first place the lot was rather large for a city lot, for though the house was large, there was plenty of room to romp and to play. Just beside the front porch was a cherry tree, which, however, other children found it just as convenient in season as the parsonage youngsters.

“Mother,” said Jimmie one day, “why do boys from down the street always try to steal our cherries?”

“I suppose,” said the mother slowly, “because they have not learned the Seventh Commandment.”

“But don’t you think, mother,” continued Jimmy, “that the stolen cherries will burn those children in their stomachs?”

The back yard was most attractive for various reasons. Of course, one corner was occupied by a large garden, and this plot was guarded most religiously, for the minister was very strict about his vegetables, and the children were not permitted to tramp down any of the plants that helped to feed the many hungry mouths. But there was a large expanse of hardy lawn next to the sheds, and it was here that the children could romp to their hearts’ content. And what wonderful things could be played out there! A few packing boxes, such as remained from moving time, made the finest houses, even though not more than two children could squeeze into one small compartment at one time. When the grass along the fence grew to a height of a foot or more, it served as a splendid place of concealment when playing Indian, and the shed themselves could be used in ways too numerous to mention.

Nor was this all, for the practical wisdom of the parsonage mother provided a fine, large sand-pit with a good roof, where the children could play by the hour, always devising new forms of architecture and of landscape gardening, and incidentally keeping out of mischief. A fine maple tree which grew just on the other side

of the fence, spread a most welcome shade for a large part of the afternoon and contributed greatly to the welfare of the parsonage children.

When the family moved in, that section of the city was but sparsely settled, and there were open spaces on practically every side. The fields were really parts of former meadows, and they were still used by the cows of the neighborhood. What a great number of buttercups grew out in those fields, even when the neighborhood was built up! And in the early years violets and forget-me-nots were found in secluded places. As long as no houses interfered with the view, Jimmie received permission to romp on the fields to his heart's content, and many a kite went up when March winds blew with steady gusts or when April storms had passed.

The streets, of course, were terrible in the early days, and the sidewalks were not much better. When the frost came out of the ground in the spring, the roads were practically bottomless. When the delivery trucks from the factories from the suburbs came down the street, they sometimes sank down in the mire, not only to their hubs, but to the bed of the wagon, and it often required the work of hours before they were pulled out of the hole. On the sidewalks a peculiar phenomenon could be observed at the same time of the year. The walks had been filled with cinders and ashes, but when the frost left the clay beneath, the upper crust had a rubbery consistency, and the school-children found it great fun to jump up and down on such places until the clay squirted out through cracks in the crust and painted trousers and dresses with yellow streaks.

It was hard for the parsonage children, during the first years, to become accustomed to going to church, for this building was about a mile away, and was not at all like the fine building to which they had become attached in the country. The church was a long, low structure, for several additions had been built in the course of time, causing the building to resemble an old-fashioned bowling-alley more than a church. During the week the rambling structure was used as a school, and there were several rooms were bounded by movable partitions. In the course of time the newness and the strangeness wore off, for new impressions were continually crowding in on the minds eager for untried experiences.

### Chapter 3. TRIPS NEAR AND FAR

After the family had moved into their own home and become used to the new surroundings, matters soon found their level. The older boys and girls started out for school every morning, even though they found the northern climate somewhat severe and the way to school rather far.

So Jimmie and Ned were, to some extent, left to their own devices and inventions. Nor was Jimmie slow in making use of every opportunity to extend his horizon. Of course, the house itself, including the cellar with its dark places under the steps, was soon explored. The yard also and the sheds were subjected to a very thorough investigation. Ned did not quite see it that way, but the older and stronger Jimmie usually found little trouble in persuading him.

“Come on!” Jimmie would say. “Let’s go out in the field.”

“Did Mama say?” was Ned’s cautious question.

“She said we could go out if we always stay where she can see us.”

“All right,” little Ned would sigh as he dutifully climbed through the board fence on the east side and toddled along in the wake of the more venturesome brother.

It did not take much to keep the little fellows interested, and the field, especially in the spring and early summer, offered enough material to keep them busy for hours at a time. The dandelions grew with marvelously long stems in the high grass of the meadow, and it was such fun to make long chains of dandelion stems. A little later in the season one could make wreaths of buttercups or of clover flowers which grew in rich profusion all over the neighborhood.

But there was little fun in these trips late in the afternoon and on Saturdays, for then the big boys wanted to play ball. At such

times little Jimmie found himself very much superfluous, unless he was willing to act as a backstop and chase off his stubby legs in finding the foul balls which flew to the most unlikely corners of the field.

“Jimmie, hurry and find that ball!” Timmy would call. For a while this was fun enough, and Jimmie was good-natured to a pretty fair degree. But it was not long before he preferred to disappear to more congenial fields, leaving the big brothers and their chums in undisturbed possession of the ball park.

There was some compensation for Jimmie, however. From time to time his father would come downstairs about nine o’clock in the morning, with a most mysterious air, but with a smile lurking in the corners of his eyes.

“Where’s Jimmie?” he would call.

Jimmie knew this tone of voice very well, and he came as fast as he could.

“Here I am, papa. Did you want me?”

“Do you suppose you could stand a ride on the train, if you can sit next to me?”

Now, wasn’t that just fine for daddy to think of a little boy in such a way! Jimmie, who otherwise as not over fond of water, was only too glad to scrub himself and to be scrubbed until his face fairly shone. Then he could put on his best suit and march along with father.

Often these trips were only down town, the suburban train service being very satisfactory at that time. It was only fifteen or twenty minutes on the train, but now many things could be noted from the car window! And then to cross the public square downtown, to see the thousands of hurrying people, to go up in some of the big buildings! Why, it fairly took the boy’s breath away. What yarns he was able to tell mother when he came home! For hours his little tongue would almost trip over itself as he described the wonderful objects which he had observed on his trip.

Occasionally the excursions of this kind were extended to a larger radius, especially when the minister found it necessary to call

on some other pastor for some discussion. Then the trip on the train sometimes took more than an hour. Jimmie never grew tired of seeing the vegetable and dairy farms near the city and of observing the many different manifestations of nature, the green fields, later yellow and brown with the promise of rich harvests, the beautiful forests through which the train thundered so quickly, the bridges which gave out a hollow sound as they crossed.

It was also very fine to meet so many kind people at the end of the trip, and this feature of the excursions probably appealed to Jimmie as much as anything else. What fun it was to go out into an orchard and to pick as many cherries as one pleased! And how welcome was the invitation which occasionally came: "Jimmie, you may go out to the strawberry patch and eat as many berries as you like; only don't step on the vines!"

Sometimes the good women of the near-by parsonage were so much concerned about the welfare of the boy that they fed him to the point of saturation. It was at such times that the boy would lay his head against his father on the way home and quietly go to sleep. More than once he did not see a thing along the road, and could hardly be roused sufficiently to walk home from the station and to get ready for bed. But it was a glorious life for the boy.

But the biggest experience of his early boyhood was yet to come, and this was brought about in the following manner. All good parsonage mothers have the unfortunate habit of doing about twice as much as they have any business to do, and Jimmie's mother was no exception. She not only took care of the big house practically all alone, but she was also active in some of the work of the congregation and cheerfully undertook many a task which might have fallen to the lot of a woman with a smaller family or with more money to spend. The result was almost inevitable. The minister's wife had a nervous breakdown, and the doctor insisted that she have a long rest, preferably out in the country somewhere. When he made this statement, he realized, of course, that this would mean taking Baby Ruth too, for she was barely six months old.

Some long consultations followed, of which the children were kept more or less in ignorance. Jimmie noticed, also, that the letters bearing the postmark of a small town in a Western state were

becoming more numerous. Then there came a day when a solemn announcement was made. Mother was to go out to grandmother's out West, and she was to take the baby and Jimmie along. A girl, who had been engaged for six months was willing to take care of little Ned as a side-line to her job, but she could not manage two little wild ones. And so Jimmie's great adventure began.

The decision once being made, everything was made ready for the trip just as fast as possible. Within a week the necessary clothes were provided, and the trunk was hauled down to the station by the grocer's boy, who was ready to do such favors during the slack hours of the day. The day of departure came. Little Jimmie, who had been rigged out very neatly in some clothes which had originally belonged to Tommy, hopped from one foot to the other.

"Mother," he asked, "will the train take us straight to grandfather's?"

"Mother, will the train go as fast as that which took us to the big city?"

"Mother, will the conductor make me pay, too? I'm getting mighty big now."

And a thousand other questions and remarks came from the little bundle of impatience. He felt mighty important when he was permitted to carry a parcel as they boarded the horse-car to the depot. When they had arrived there, he was in a fever of anxiety, running back and forth between the big windows and asking whether the train was not coming soon.

Fortunately for the mother, the little chap went to sleep almost as soon as she had placed him on a seat in the car, for they traveled in a day coach. At Chicago they had a wait of several hours before the train for the West was due to leave, and the mother found it a task to keep Jimmie in the seat with her. There was so very much to see, and the boy was interested in everything that he saw. The result was that she was in a nervous tension almost continually. Finding it necessary to attend to some matter with regard to her tickets, she left Jimmie alone with little Ruth for just a few minutes.

“Now be sure to stay here with baby, Jimmie,” she admonished. “Mama will be gone for only a few minutes.” And Jimmie promised most faithfully.

But unfortunately the mother was delayed for some time, and when she came back, Jimmie was not in evidence. With a heart-sick feeling she picked up the baby and started on a search for the boy. But she had hardly reached the head of the stairs when she found Jimmie coming toward her, holding firmly to the hand of a big policeman.

“You see, mother,” he explained, “you stayed away so long that I thought you were lost, and papa specially told me to watch out that you would not get lost. So I just went to the policeman and told him about it, and he said that he would help me find my mama again.”

Mother was only too glad to have the boy with her again, and so she thanked the officer for taking care of the boy and took him back to her place in the waiting-room. But it was a relief to her that the train left shortly afterward, for the business of looking after that lively little boy while she had to pack a baby around at the same time was getting too much. When the train pulled out toward evening, the boy was soon in the land of dreams, and the poor mother had a chance to get a little rest during the night.

The morning after, just as the first gray of the dawn appeared in the east, the three travelers got off the branch line train at a little station which was hardly more than a shack on the edge of the endless prairie. The wind was cool at this time of the year, and the mother looked around anxiously, for there seemed to be no person in evidence. But after a few minutes a buggy drew up at the edge of the platform, and grandfather’s burly form clambered down to assist the travelers. And oh! what a welcome awaited them out in the parsonage on the prairie. Never did eggs and milk taste better than after that ride in the bracing air of early morning on the Western prairies.

Now began a life of such wonderful realities and possibilities that Jimmie thought he was dreaming and might wake up at any moment to find that it was not real. Of course, he had a

high measure of awe for grandfather, although he was nice enough in speaking to the boy. But grandmother was a brick, if there ever was one. She seemed to understand little boys best of all, for she always knew just what to suggest next by way of useful occupation and entertainment. And then there were so many thing to see that Jimmie used up months of time in finding out all about the place.

There was, first of all, the big, rambling parsonage with its many cozy nooks and corners, where one could always manage to creep for a little nap. Then there was the large flower garden on the side of the house with its riot of color and the truck garden in the rear. It seemed that grandmother spent very much time out in that garden, for she wanted to keep all the weeds out and to get enough vegetables and fruit to fill just hundreds of cans. On the other side of the high fence were the barns and outhouses, especially the storm-sheds for the teams of the congregation members on Sunday and for the horses and mule of the school-children during the week. What fine hiding-place one could find in the length of these rambling structures, and how well one could play there on rainy days!

The old stone church stood just in front of the parsonage. It was not really large enough to take care of all the members, and even the balcony was crowded to capacity every Sunday. Jimmie was permitted to come into the vestry sometimes, and he looked with awe on the pulpit gown which hung in a little clothes closet, and upon the great Bible which was used in the pulpit on Sundays. Grandfather believed in long sermons, and it was often after twelve o'clock before he said "Amen." Jimmie wondered how one man could carry such an immense amount of theological knowledge in his head.

The vestry window overlooked the cemetery, the same one in which grandfather's body was later to find its rest. Many a person was carried out to that beautiful plot with grandfather leading the procession, and many a word of comfort was spoken by him over the casket of some beloved parishioner before he himself lay before the altar from which he had so often dispensed words of Gospel cheer.

Jimmie's most exciting time was toward evening when Aunt Bess would call out: "Time to gather the eggs!"

Just as fast as he could get to the kitchen door, Jimmie would hurry to pick up the basket which was used for the treasures of the hennery. He soon found out where the hens preferred to place the eggs. Some of them were sensible enough to deposit their eggs in the chicken-coop, in the regulation nests. But others had tendencies toward a strange independence. Then made their own nests in the coach-house, on the hayloft, even in the orchard. But they could not fool Jimmie and Uncle Bill, who was an adopted boy and hardly older than Jimmie himself. What a proud moment when two boys could come marching in to Aunt Bess and announce that they had gathered one or two, or even a half-dozen eggs more than the day before!

It was a wonderful time that Jimmie had out there on the prairie in grandmother's parsonage. Time never hung heavy on his hands, for there seemed to be something happening every day. Filled to overflowing with the experiences of the day, he would return to mother, who grew better from day to day. And she, wise woman that she was, would play her little game.

"Well, boy," she would say, "did you have a good time today?"

"Just wonderful, mother," the boy would answer, while his eyes sparkled with the reaction of new experiences and his cheeks glowed with the color of health.

What wonderful memories Jimmie stored up at this time, memories which came back to him for many long years. He remembered the great wedding, which lasted for days, where they brought on cake after cake, while an endless procession of roast chickens and boiled hams passed down the lines of the many guests. He remembered also the long trip to the county-seat one day, when it was necessary to remove a stubborn milk-tooth. How he did yell when the dentist suddenly jerked the offending tooth out of his gaping mouth! And how Uncle Ben did laugh as he came across the corridor from his office and found out the source of all this noise!

One morning Jimmie was playing near the church, when he looked up to see a man cross the church-yard. The man looked familiar. One more close look was sufficient. "Father! Father!" called the boy as he flew across the lawn. But father laid a finger on his lips. "Don't make any noise, boy," said he. "I want to surprise mother."

And a surprise it surely was, for mother had not expected him for several weeks. Just a few days more, and then the train took back, not four, but only three travelers, for Baby Ruth stayed with grandmother, but Jimmie had to return to the big city, for it was time for him to go to school.

On this trip, for the first time in his life, Jimmie enjoyed the luxury of a sleeper. And a sound sleep was his, for when he crawled out of his berth the next morning, it was after ten o' clock, and the whole carful of people grinned at him for a sleepy-head. But mother soon consoled him, and there was no interruption in his complete enjoyment of every minute of the time till they reached the big city.

#### Chapter 4. THE FIRST YEARS AT SCHOOL

Jimmie was not yet six years old when he entered school. It was before the day of kindergartens, but he had received so many impressions at home and had had so many advantages in the matter of hearing correct speech that he was really much farther advanced than most of the other children in the first grade. Though he was a sturdy little fellow, the way to school was rather far for him, especially the first winter. The older boys thought nothing of the mile or more which they had to make twice, and often four times, daily, but Jimmie was often very tired, and big sister had to take his hand almost every day on the way home from school.

Jimmie had developed a peculiar philosophy with regard to physical needs and pains. On one of the first days of school he came over to his mother as she sat in the sitting-room mending stockings.

“Mother, I’m so hungry,” he complained.

“All right, son,” said she, “you may have a piece of bread and an apple. It’s lying ready for you in the pantry.”

“But I’m not hungry in my tummy,” said the boy. “I’m hungry in my feet.”

Since practically the only pain he had had till then was that of a stomach-ache when he had eaten too much, he associated all pains with hunger.

But he took a great interest in his school work. And no wonder, for the teacher of that particular class was a man who had an unusual faculty of understanding children and of meeting their needs. It was not that he could not be strict when the situation required stern measures. If some of the children had been mean or if he found that they had used foul speech, he could be most relentlessly severe. But such measures were not often required, for

the boys and girls of his class loved him most dearly, even while they stood in awe of his stick.

Of course, the babies occupied cramped quarters during the first year. They had only a small space partitioned off in the one end of the building, which was used for church services on Sunday. The altar was set aside during the week, and its platform became the teacher's place during the week. And into the few square feet up to the first partition almost a hundred children were crowded. Even with the old-fashioned long benches, which would seat as high as twelve youngsters, it was a hard thing to accommodate them all. A new-fashioned teacher would have found it a problem to apply his rules of class and school management under such conditions. But this first-grade teacher managed, somehow, not only to keep the youngsters out of mischief the greater part of the time, but also to impart to them a little knowledge and other information, especially in the beautiful stories of the Bible.

Jimmie enjoyed his work very much, if work it could be called. His primer became his constant companion, and he pestered his big sister to tell all the Bible stories which the teacher told so beautifully in school. Nor did he rest till his father gave him a Bible History picture book of his own. Since he could not read yet, he told the stories of pictures to all who listened to him, willingly or unwillingly, but it is to be feared that much apocryphal material crept into his recitations from time to time.

"Sister," he said one day, "do you know that the serpent first ate an apple off the tree and then gave a bite to Eve?"

"But listen, Jimmie," said big Sister, "you didn't get that quite right. The serpent just told Eve to eat of the tree."

"Well, do you suppose Eve would have eaten unless the serpent had first showed her that there was no poison in the fruit?"

Meanwhile a new school was being build on a fine, large plot of ground which the congregation had bought. The parsonage children sometimes received permission to go over and watch the workmen for a little while, since the new structure was only a block away from their home. How Jimmie opened his eyes when he saw the size of the new school! Why, it was just ever and ever so much

bigger than the old school over on Bremen Road. And how beautiful everything was when the carpenters had finished up the inside of the building! There was the fine, large entrance leading into the wide corridor which ran the full length of the school. On either side of this corridor were located the schoolrooms for the lower grades. The rooms on the second floor were intended for the upper grades, but they were arranged, for the present, to be used as an auditorium, since the congregation was not yet in a position to build a church adequate for its needs. The four upper grades were still quartered at the old building, and there the catechumen classes were likewise held, for the children to be confirmed were almost without exception such as belonged to the seventh and eighth grades.

It seemed such a short time before the large vacation came along. And in this connection the term “large” or “long” vacation was really a misnomer, especially in the light of modern customs. For Jimmie and his brothers and sisters went to school up to July 1, and the fall term opened not later than August 15. The question of finding ways and means of keeping the children off the street during the summer did not loom nearly so large at that time as it does to-day.

When fall came, the new school was ready for the children. And how proud the little tots were when they marched into the fine, airy rooms! Everything was in the finest condition – the hard-wood floors, the black boards, the reading charts, the teacher’s platform and desk, and especially the children’s desks. These were not yet single desks, for at that time double desks were considered luxurious enough, but they were so modern and so shiny, and to the children they were just the essence of everything that was splendid.

“Mama, just think,” Jimmie reported at home the first evening, “the top of my desk is so shiny that I can see my face in it.”

“I suppose,” said mother, “that my boy will have to keep his face real clean from now on, otherwise the desk will be ashamed of him.”

“Do you really think so, mother?” said the boy, whose aversion to soap and water had given him the nickname “Dirty” on the part of his older brothers, now in the first stage of adolescent cleanness.

Jimmie may have seen the smile which lurked in mother’s eyes, for he was not quite so serious as he should have been. Nevertheless he made noteworthy efforts to keep his face and hands somewhat cleaner than they had usually been.

The number of children in this room had now gone far beyond the hundred mark, and it is a mystery to this day how this band of healthy young Americans was ever kept in order by that one little teacher. But there was never any doubt in the minds of the children as to who was boss in the room. From time to time a “quiet quarter-hour” was arranged, chiefly for the purpose of training the children in self-control. During this time any playing or whispering was carefully noted. When the time was up, the culprits were summoned to the front of the room, where they received their punishment. Regardless of modern opinions, the children of that class are ready to vouch for the effectiveness of the system which was applied in their case. Nor was there any feeling of resentment on their part, though bitter tears were often shed. It seems that here, as in many other things, the proof of the pudding was in the eating, that is, in the successful working out of the plan.

Meanwhile the great majority of the class made fine progress in penetrating into the mysteries of the primer and of the first reader. The alphabet method still exerted a great deal of power, though the word method of teaching reading was clamoring for a hearing. Yet the progress of the pupils was remarkable, and certainly no fault could be found with their spelling. Here they excelled, as they did in the understanding of the matter studied by them. This the minister soon found out with regard to this own son.

One Saturday morning Jimmie was not to be seen out in the back yard or in his customary haunts, and little Ned was looking for him in a rather forlorn fashion. Jimmie had gotten an idea, and it seemed necessary that this idea should be put into operation at once. He was lying under the big bed upstairs flat on his stomach, with his primer on one side and a big sheet of paper on the other.

Carefully and laboriously he was translating a lesson from the primer into German, writing down every word as he understood it. About an hour later, when his self-imposed task was completed, Jimmie tiptoed over to the door of father's study. The pastor was somewhat surprised to receive a visit from his young son, and, to say the truth, the son was somewhat surprised at himself for venturing to come on a Saturday morning, when the rule held that father was not to be disturbed. Nevertheless, he held out his script with a rather uncertain air. What was his surprise when his father patted him kindly on the head, as he criticised the one or the other expression. But still more surprised was the boy when father reached into his pocket and gave him a bright new penny.

"Mother," said he a few minutes later, after he had flown, rather than walked down the steps, "you'll have to put my money in the bank, for I want to keep it till I get big and go to college." –

The new school proved a boon to the parsonage children in more than one respect. For one thing, the yard of the new structure was very large, for it was to provide space for a further school building, as well as for a large church, which the congregation contemplated erecting some time in the future. There was room enough and to spare for games of all kinds. During the day the older boys usually played ball on some part of the compound, and a year or two later Jimmie could at least play out in the field. It was on moonlight nights that the children had their most exciting times. It was then that mother had them all promise that they must not go outside the bounds of the big lot, and they might stay out until the big whistle sounded curfew. What fun it was to play hide-and-go-seek or greywolf! There were so many good hiding-places at the big down-spouts of the building, as well as in the high grass out in the corners, that there was practically no let-up in the intensity of the games till the last person was caught.

Often, when the smaller children became tired, they all sat down on the platform before the main entrance to listen to the stories which big Sister could tell so well. This was also the time when the various wishes regarding birthdays and Christmas were registered. And how often did not the thoughts of the children fly forward into the future as they tried to picture to themselves just

what would happen after schooldays were over and they would go out into the world. Tommy and Willie had quite made up their minds at an early day to follow in the footsteps of their father, but Jimmie was equally determined to become a business man and to earn enough money for the whole family.

In later years Jimmie looked back to this period of his early childhood with the regrets which always come to those who have the advantages of almost ideal conditions of home life. But there were also other happenings which stood out in his memory which peculiar clarity, both of them concerned with direct evidences of angel protection.

The first incident happened on the main business street near the parsonage. His mother usually did all the baking for the family, and not only her bread, but especially her coffee cake enjoyed a reputation far beyond the immediate neighborhood. But for that very reason the many hungry youngsters very often did more than their share in reducing the visible supply. The result was that sometimes the amount on hand was suddenly depleted, especially in the evening, when the appetites of the children were keenest. Now, there was a bakery about two blocks away, which, in an emergency, had to serve the needs of the family. Jimmie was usually the one to be delegated as the bread boy. One evening, a few years after the first electric cars had been introduced, Jimmie was sent to the bakery with orders to hurry back. In his eagerness to follow these orders he crossed behind a car moving in one direction without looking to see whether another tram-car was coming in the opposite direction. Just as he was about to step on the second track, a car came along at full speed. It seem certain that he would be crushed to death. But suddenly Jimmie found himself lifted up for a mighty jump, much farther than his stubby legs could have managed otherwise, and in a twinkling he was on the opposite sidewalk. Here was such an obvious example of the protection of angels that Jimmie was directly conscious of it and so reported to mother before he went to bed that night.

The other experience was along the same lines. Jimmie was one day coming back from the old school. At the end of the street was an old brickyard, which was practically abandoned, nothing but

an old barn being in use for a number of teams employed on another bit of property. The wooden fence which bounded this abandoned property was about six feet high, but in a very bad state of repairs, many of the boards having been removed in the course of time. There was a high wind blowing that afternoon, but Jimmie paid little attention to it, being absorbed in some problem which had come to his attention. Suddenly he stopped and, without any special reason, stepped through one of the openings in the fence, to walk along the inside, as the children often did. Hardly had he entered the lot when a strong gust of wind tore off the fence and threw it across the sidewalk. If Jimmie had taken another step on the outside of the yard, the fence would most surely have struck him with serious consequences. This happening again was such an obvious proof of the sheltering hand of God and of His holy angels that it made a deep impression in the boy's mind. He now understood the words of the beautiful verse: He will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear up thee on their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

## Chapter 5. NO IDLE HANDS!

The parsonage mother was not particularly given to the quoting of proverbs, but she had a few which she used upon occasion, making the application as the case required. There was one, particularly, which the parsonage children heard oftener than any other, namely: The devil has work for idle hands to do! Accordingly it was the aim in the parsonage that every child should at all times be engaged in some useful occupation or recreation. It was undoubtedly due to this fact that the boys of the parsonage learned to be systematic in both their work and their play, for mother was a keen educator, and she planned the busy work of the children a long while in advance.

Since the older boys were in school, a number of years ahead of Jimmie, and since they left for the preparatory institute shortly after their confirmation, much of the regular work about the house fell on the shoulders of the younger boy. First and foremost among these "chores," as they were called, was that of providing fuel for the various stoves in the house. Of these the kitchen stove naturally used up the most fuel, for it was in use the year around. In the sitting-room an immense base burner drove the cold to the most remote corners, and this fine stove often had to take care of the parlor as well. In mother's room there was an open fireplace, which was used but seldom, but at such times devoured all the fuel one could provide with a greed which amazed those who had to provide for its insatiable mouth. The only heating stove on the second floor was that in the study, and that had to be kept practically all the time, for the minister had to have a warm room whenever he returned from his many visits.

The task of providing the necessary fuel for the several stoves was complicated by the fact that every one of them required a different treatment. The kitchen stove needed soft coal in fairly large chunks, but also an armful of kindling every day, for the fire

had to be started every morning. The base burner burned hard coal, and this fire usually lasted all winter, unless some one neglected to shake down the clinkers in the evening and the draft was, therefore, shut off entirely. The stove in the study burned screenings, and a large quantity of them. Often the fire in this stove did not go out for weeks at a time, since it was replenished about midnight or even later; but kindling had to be ready at all times, for one never could tell when this fire would get a notion to expire.

Jimmie solved the problem, to some extent, but having a large wood- and coal-box in the kitchen and in the study. It always was a proud moment when he could point to either box filled to the top. But when the thermometer hovered about zero, the fuel melted away like snow on a hot stove, and it was necessary to make trips to the sheds in the morning as well as in the evening. It would have been a disgrace to have the boxes entirely empty, and Jimmie was not often caught napping. If he was, he knew that he was in for an unmerciful teasing on the part of the older children. But he, in turn, occasionally put over a joke which was accepted more or less gracefully by the rest of the family. Thus he would gravely announce on the last day of December, at supper:

“I have enough fuel in the bins for the whole year!”

Invariably some one would be caught napping, meeting his statement with a derisive raising of eyebrows and, most likely, with a doubting statement as well. It was always a moment of triumph when Jimmie could add, to his first announcement:

“Why, don’t you know that to-morrow is the first day of a new year?”

The coldest weather of the winter lasted about three weeks, and it was then that the boys of the neighborhood usually formed an association for the doing of chores, and particularly for the hauling of coal to the house. There is an exhilaration about cooperative work which found out before very long. The work was done twice as fast when they all joined in it, and incidentally, they all had more time for play before the call for supper sounded.

A chore that was dreaded by Jimmie more than any other was that connected with the weekly washday. He did not mind

getting up in the morning and taking his turn at starting the kitchen fire, for that would usually leap into flame in just a few minutes. But the task of doing a washing for such a large family took the better part of the day. In summer there was some fun connected with it, for then the washing-machine was carried outside into the shade of the big maple, and mother made the whole task a sort of game, often with a special surprise at the end.

But in winter there was no time for games; the days were too short, and the coal-oil lamps were too inadequate. Every moment of daylight had to be utilized, and Jimmie had to come home as fast as he could make it. Of course, mother took care to have everything ready the minute he stepped into the house, but the turning of the washing-machine was his job, and this had to be done just so, and the handling of the wringer as well. The rule was that every machine full had to be done so many minutes, five minutes for the white clothes, ten for the colored, and the colored clothes had to be done a second time, because they did not receive the benefit of a preliminary boiling, as did the white clothes. The situation led to many a good-natured discussion between the two chief launderers, for Jimmie had soon gotten into the habit of counting the number of strokes back and forth. He soon made known his idea.

“Mother, why can’t I simply turn so many strokes? I have counted them exactly for the number of minutes, and we can get through faster if we count instead of watching the clock.”

But mother objected. “That will never do, boy, for you will then get into the habit of taking shorter strokes on the machine, and my clothes will not come out as nice and clean as I want them.”

“But, mother, I can take long strokes and hurry faster anyway. It’s so much more fun to work that way.”

“No, son, I want every machine full to have a soaking of just so many minutes, and it is your job to keep the machine a-going with out interruption. That’s the best way to take care of the clothes of the family.”

And mother’s way was the better, as usual, though it took Jimmie a long time to find this out for himself.

Some of the old-fashioned wringers were not exactly easy to handle, but Jimmie finally managed to learn the easiest way of turning out the work. For the work that was there had to be done, that was the rule of the house, and the parsonage mother would not permit this rule to be set aside.

Then there was cooking and baking. The saying of the chief cook was that it was a mighty good thing for a boy to learn at least the fundamental facts concerning cooking and baking, and so Jimmie was gradually introduced into the mysteries of these arts. He had to learn to kindle a fire in the proper way, with the least waste of fuel, and without clogging up the flue with heavy smoke. It was not so much of a job to boil foods, for he soon learned that meats will not easily burn if they are kept covered with water. It was harder to remember that all cereals must be stirred continually in order that they may not burn. At that time fireless cookers and steam cookers were not yet in general use, if, indeed, they were known at all, and so this information was very essential for cooking. The question of frying foods was also solved without too many mishaps, for lard was then comparatively cheap, and so one could grease the pan very thoroughly before putting on the steak or before frying the eggs. The hardest lesson was that of baking, and there poor Jimmie never did get beyond the rudiments. The mixing of bread (without the modern mixer) in itself required some strength and skill, and it bothered him to get a batch of bread stirred up in just the right proportions. If once the dough was mixed, he was not worried so much about the outcome, for the oven of the kitchen did the finest kind of baking.

“Mother, why does the bread always run when I try to start it?”

“Because you don’t mix in enough flour to make it stiff..”

Jimmie did not like to admit that his arms were, after all, hardly strong enough, as yet, to do the mixing properly, and so he grimly hung on till he had mastered the rudiments of bread baking. But he never got very far beyond that point, and the secret of his mother’s excellent coffee cakes is a secret to him still.

Much more fun was connected with the fall canning. In those days not much canning of vegetables was done, except tomatoes, beans, and sauerkraut. But fruit was put up by the dozens and by the scores. Even when the strawberries were the cheapest, about the middle of June or somewhat earlier, a crate or two came in for canning. Then, somewhat later in the season, followed blackberries, raspberries, sometimes also gooseberries. But the excitement of canning reached its climax when peaches, apricots, and plums were cheap. Then they came in by the crate and the gallon, and then came the delectable job of making jams and jellies. Apple butter, also, was made in large quantities, for this had to take the place of fresh apples for a part of the time, although several bushels of Jonathans or Greenings were usually spread out on dry sand in the cellar.

Jimmie always believed that the cooking of peach butter was one of the greatest sports in existence. It was, so far as he was concerned, for he had nothing to do with the peeling and stoning of the fruit. When the season was at its height, a number of women would come together, going shares on the peaches which were provided for this particular occasion. The peeling was ordinarily done outside, the women sitting around a large tub full of peaches. As soon as any of the women had a jar or a pail full of peeled peaches, these were dumped into a large kettle which hung over a wood fire near by. This kettle was in charge of the boys, for they had to stir the cooking mass with a special device which consisted of a wide piece of wood punctured with several holes and fastened to a long pole. The harder the peach butter boiled, the harder the boys had to stir, and it amused Jimmie to sing some of the school songs in exact time with the stirring. But before evening came, one's arms became mighty tired, and it was only the thought of the heaps and heaps of delicious fruit that kept him and his companions at their task.

Late in the fall, when cold weather had set in to stay, there came a day which always stirred the hearts of all the parsonage youngsters. Toward the end of some week, shortly before Thanksgiving, mother would do the regular weekly cleaning a little sooner. Then she would announce on a Friday evening: "Tomorrow we shall make sausage and cure meat."

Jimmie knew what this meant. It meant that, on Saturday morning, the butcher or a farmer would bring in a dressed pig or at least a half, and also a quarter of beef. The old kitchen table was ready for this load, and mother had gotten all the knives ready for the occasion. Jimmie's job on that day consisted in helping mother by holding the larger pieces as she cut them, in keeping enough fuel on hand to render the leaf lard, and in mixing some of the meat for sausages. When everything was properly cooked and all the ingredients added, the supreme moment of the day came, for then mother packed the meat into the sausage machine, and while Jimmie slowly turned the crank, mother held the casings. What a fine sight it was, about six or seven o'clock in the evening, to have all the various sausages hanging on poles just beneath the rafters, out of reach of cats and mice! Some of the sausage could be eaten without smoking, but the finest flavor was given by the smoldering fire of hickory shavings. This was better, ever, than the use of liquid smoke, which many people used, for it imparted a tang to the sausage which caused the children to call for more and more helpings. And who can imagine a finer meal anywhere than slices of fried mush with home-made sausage? No wonder the parsonage children were usually the pictures of health and sturdiness.

In this way the parsonage mother saw to it that the proverb about idle hands did not harm any of her little flock. Nor did she insist upon work only, with out recreation. Not only did she see to it that her boys and girls had enough fresh air in winter, but she made the summer days rich in healthful games and in various forms of recreation. But this phase of our story is worth a special chapter or more.

## Chapter 6. THE CLANG OF THE FIRE BELLS

Where is the boy whose heart does not thrill to the clang of the fire bell? And not only boys, but a good many girls, and men and women as well, feel the strange excitement which stirs the pulses when the fire engine goes roaring and crashing down the street.

If this is true to-day, with the most modern equipment and with automatic sprinklers installed in practically every large building and factory, how much more was it true forty years ago, when the fire-fighting apparatus was still of a rather primitive kind, as compared with present-day standards! And we must not forget that there were other factors, in those days, which are almost unknown in ours.

The topic of fire engines seems to have been in the air in the big city, and particularly on the outskirts of the manufacturing section where the parsonage was located. The boys and girls talked about the subject of fires at school, many grown-ups discussed it when they came together in any kind of social event: it seemed to be inexhaustive. And Jimmie was soon drawn into this way of thinking.

He really caught the fever when some of the neighbor boys took him down several times to see the evening practice run of the nearest fire department. The custom had been established at No. 16 engine house to have the horses respond to an alarm every evening at eight o'clock, unless, of course, the entire company was out on active duty. At least a half-hour before the scheduled time the windows of the fire station were invariably filled with the faces of boys, and girls too, all anxious to see the horses perform. Promptly at the stroke of eight the chief would ring the gong, the barriers would fall, and the big horses would come trotting out to their respective places beneath the harness. It took but a few moments to drop the various pieces of the harness upon their backs and to fasten them in place. Since the barriers at the front doors were not removed at practice, the horses seemed to feel that this was only

sport and, upon being released from the harness would immediately return to their stalls. But for the boys these were exciting five minutes.

“Did you see that big bay come prancing out?” one of them would exclaim. “Isn’t he a beauty?!”

“I like the gray better. He’s all muscle, and his coat is as glossy as silk.”

And soon the discussion went on till the boys were once more at home. And Jimmie was quick to learn the language of the fire stations and to thrill to the excitement of it all.

There was enough opportunity of watching the firemen in action, although they were often sadly handicapped by the condition of the streets. In spring especially the great weight of the engines would not only retard their progress to the scene of a fire, but it happened more than once that they would sink down beyond the hubs, just as if they were looking for the shortest way to China, and all the straining of the horses would not budge the mass of iron and steel. At such times the firemen had to resort to various devices. Often they brought gunnysacks and planks along; at other times they took the horses from the lighter hose-cart and hitched them to the end of the tongue. There was certainly enough excitement for any small boy, and to spare, on occasions of this kind.

One of the most exciting fires of those years occurred right on the same street and barely a block away. All the houses on either side of the street, with the exception of an old mansion, were frame buildings, and most of them would burn like tinder if once a fire got a start. One Saturday afternoon the fire department came tearing past with a terrible clatter. Immediately behind it swarmed the inevitable mob of fire fans, with the small boys naturally in the lead. The blaze certainly looked wicked enough, since it rose high into the air, while burning shingles were carried far away by the high wind. It did not take Jimmie very long to get his mother’s consent to see the fire and to get a good place across the street. The small dwelling house was burning from one end to the other. Neighbors, eager to help, had, as usual, thrown out the least

valuable furniture, which now lay about in confusion in a field near by. The mother of the house was standing near the gate, wringing her hands in helpless agony, while she called upon all the saints in the calendar to witness her doom. It seemed that she had sent some of the little children upstairs to play while she went to the store. The youngsters had discovered a box of matches in some corner and had promptly proceeded to try them out. When the clothes hanging in the garret had caught fire, the little ones had run to the window to call for help, and the opening had served to create a draft which carried the flames through the whole house in just a few minutes. Luckily the children had enough sense to run down the stairway before the second floor was a seething mass of flames.

This occurrence made a deep impression upon little Jimmie, especially since his mother improved the occasion by having him point out the moral of the incident, namely, never to play with matches. Mother was wise enough not to make too many rules and thus to confuse the lad, but she did emphasize also the need of keeping all the windows closed when a fire had once gotten a start. With eyes big as saucers Jimmie asked:

“What if those two girls would have burned up?”

“Do you suppose they would have fallen asleep in Jesus’ wounds, as you say in your little prayer?” asked mother.

“I don’t know,” said Jimmie. “I’ve heard them use some awful swear words once in a while when they walk down the street.”

“Then see to it that you never do such a thing, for you know the Savior wants us to be pure in heart. Never forget to place yourself and all your brothers and sisters in the care of Jesus before going to sleep. How does the little verse read that you just learned in school?”

And Jimmie recited:

“Now I lay me down to sleep:  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take,  
And this I ask for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

But Jimmie had to learn the lesson with regard to fires by sterner measures, and this happened about a year and a half later. The parsonage was not rich in this world's goods, and therefore the spending money given to the children amounted to very little indeed. A penny was by them considered a big sum, and a nickel was a fortune. But on one day in the year an exception was made, namely, on the Fourth of July, the nation's birthday. On this day the children together received twenty-five cents, and sometimes this amount, by dint of careful saving, grew to thirty cents. What wonderful things could be bought with thirty cents, to be sure! Firecrackers, of course, as six package for five cents, and pinwheels, and Roman candles, and possibly a flower-pot and some sky-rocket and a few snake-nests. The rule was that all these fireworks must be shot and burned in the presence of older people, and preferably on the cinder sidewalk and in the street. But Jimmie had found some pieces of punk, which, as every one knew, were just for "swivels," that is, firecrackers whose fuse had burned off without causing them to explode. He had gathered quite a number of these discarded crackers and decided to experiment with them. So he went to the back yard, behind the summer kitchen, and there he tried out his plans.

When all the powder had been burned to his satisfaction, Jimmie joined the rest of the family on, the front lawn. It was fortunate that on this particular Fourth of July big Sister was detained beyond the usual time in doing the supper dishes, then washed out in the summer kitchen. In this way it came about that she passed near the window which looked out over the back yard. It seemed to her that she smelled something burning, and she immediately investigated. One of Jimmie's pieces of punk had not been extinguished when he left the back yard, and a heap of rags lying near the wall of the house was about to burst into flame. Sister came just in time to put out the threatening fire. And Jimmie, a few minutes later, was a sadder and a wiser boy, for he was not permitted to take part in the big event of the evening, but had to remain on the porch behind mother's chair. And what was worse, he had to go to bed before the big fireworks in the amusement park near by could be seen, a sight which was usually a treat for the parsonage children, for they could see all the Roman candles and

the sky rockets, and sometimes a sky bomb exploded with a beautiful display of stars and streamers.

Owing partly to the distance of the new section of the city from the large fire stations and partly to such delays as were referred to above, some of the fires in the neighborhood of the parsonage were most spectacular. One night at about nine o'clock the fire engines clattered by the house with the horses on a straight gallop. Jimmie and the smaller children had been in bed for an hour, but the pillar of fire against the eastern sky was so large that the whole family was astir in just a few minutes. Finally the parents gave permission that Jimmie might go along with the older children to have a better view of the fire, for it looked as if the conflagration might assume very great proportions. As usual, the fire was much farther away than the family had at first supposed, for the glare against the dark night sky had deceived them. For almost a mile the children trotted along, together with hundreds of other fire fans. And it surely was worth while, for a large wheel foundry was burning, and not only the wooden roof, but also the wooden forms used for the, molds were ablaze. It was a sublime spectacle, especially when a large section of the roof was lifted up by the draft created by the blaze and sailed across the railroad track, narrowly missing some freight cars and falling into a large pond in a big meadow. Jimmie shivered with excitement and could hardly go to sleep after the children had reached home.

One afternoon, about half past two o'clock, while the children were just preparing for the last lessons of the day, the fire bell rang. The children could hardly wait until classes were dismissed for the afternoon, for the sounds which came to them from the outside indicated that there must be a big fire somewhere in the neighborhood. There was no dallying in the school yard on this day, but the great majority of the children were off like a flash to get a good view of the fire. And it surely was worth while. About two blocks from the school stood a large building which the children had usually called the "bone-dust" factory. It was really a bone-meal factory, and the storage rooms were full of manufactured material. The fire had begun in the boiler room at one end of the building and had spread very rapidly on account of a slight explosion of bone-dust. The building stood at the edge of a small

gully, and the wall which faced this gully had caught fire first. Just as the children arrived on the opposite side of the draw, about a hundred yards from the burning structure, the entire side of the building slowly collapsed, and the flames shot through the entire second floor. The firemen could do nothing to stop the blaze at this time, for they could not get around to the side where the building was burning on account of the sudden drop toward the gully. The bone-dust was ignited as the flames ate their way along the floor, and it was a most beautiful sight to see the blazing carbon slowly cascading down into the gully beneath. It was like a great falls aflame, with tongues of fire in various colors. It was only when the roof fell down upon the blaze inside that the spectacle came to an end. But Jimmie had a long account to give that evening at the supper table, and even his father looked up now and then with some degree of real interest.

The biggest fire, however, which Jimmie ever witnessed was one which broke out among the oil-tanks in the southeastern part of the city. The fire hazard which attended the many tank-yards was ever present in the minds of the people living in this section. When the news came one day, therefore, that a fire had broken out in one of the yards and that the firemen could not get near enough to fight the blaze successfully, there was many an anxious heart that trembled with apprehension. It was more than two miles from the parsonage to the place where the fire was raging, but the flames could plainly be seen even during the day, while in the evening the sky was painted a lurid red almost like that which sometimes accompanied the northern lights. Some of the reports were hopeful, for men from the oil-fields, who knew how to fight fires of this kind, had been rushed up by special train; then again, the headlines of the special editions of the newspapers spoke of a losing fight. On the third day of the fire Jimmie, who was on his way home from school, suddenly heard a terrible explosion. Looking over in the direction of the fire, he saw a blazing sheaf rising high into the air, while out of the fiery mass smaller particles flew in all directions. Soon the report came that three of the largest tanks in the yard had exploded, taking with them three of the men who were trying so hard to hold the fire back. But this was, incidentally, the climax of

the great fire, for the firemen now gained control of the flames within a few hours.

Years later, when Jimmie studied the German poet's "Lay of the Bell," he was reminded again and again of the great fire which he had witnessed from a distance and concerning whose havoc he had such emphatic testimony. He had gotten first-hand knowledge of the strength of the elements when they escape from the control of men.



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Little sister needed her milk.

## Chapter 7. VACATIONS.

In those days vacations were not the long recesses which bother parents now, so that they are honestly worried about the safest way to keep their children out of mischief during the three months and more of the summer holiday. Six weeks was the limit, from July 1 to August 15, and the dog days invariably found the parsonage children back in school again.

This being the case, it was necessary to plan well in advance all the recreations of the summer, and Jimmie soon gained a certain proficiency in this exciting pastime. The calendar which hung in the boys' bedroom was carefully marked and covered with various hieroglyphics which only the boys could decipher and which were often changed as new ideas suggested themselves. One had to figure with several factors which were somewhat uncertain in quantity. For one thing, some time had to be reserved for the inevitable summer chores which father always found. One year it so happened that the house was shingled during the last week in June, and, of course, Jimmie and Ned had to carry all the old shingles out to the shed and stack them most carefully against the coming winter. That was a long and arduous job, made worse by the fact that the boys did not plan their work in a systematic manner, and thus did not see results as they desired them. Another year the dandelions had invaded the front lawn in almost unbelievable numbers, and it became necessary to remove the unsightly weeds. It was fun for an hour or so, but about that time some little backs began to hurt, and the roots of the dandelions seemed to get longer and longer.

But the boys soon found that the summer chores did not take longer than one week, and they could so plan their work that it was over by the 5th or the 6th of July, always remembering that the 4th of July was a holiday in the strictest sense of the term. This left about five weeks for such sports as delighted the hearts of healthy, fun-loving boys. It was understood, of course, that odd days could be devoted to games in the yard and in the near-by fields, while

rainy days were spent in the sheds, where the most wonderful rooms were constructed in various corners. The ball games were particularly exciting, all the children of the neighborhood taking part in them. Since the parsonage children did not have enough money to buy the regulation baseball, they had to be of an inventive turn of mind in making their own. This was usually accomplished by taking a nickel rubber ball at the core and wrapping this round and round with ends of string from parcels brought from the store. When the ball had reached its proper size, heavy pieces of ducking or awning were sewed on with the strongest thread, dipped into shoemaker's wax in order to give it more tensile strength. Jimmie had the satisfaction of knowing that a ball so constructed would outlast any two which were bought in the store for twenty-five and even for fifty cents.

The problem of getting a regulation bat was more serious, but this was also solved in due time. For one thing an errand for the neighbors brought an occasional penny or a nickel. Sometimes, in early spring, one of the paper carriers in the neighborhood was sick, and Jimmie took over his route for a day or two. But the chief source of income came toward the end of June, for by this time the oldest brother was attending college and, by virtue of this fact, was an ardent baseball fan, who always had to know the scores. So he would call Jimmie about five o'clock in the evening, give him a penny, and tell him to get a paper. Jimmie promptly ran down to the news store, got two papers for his penny (this being newsboys' price at that time), sold one of the papers on the way home, and thus was able to add to his little store of money which, with mother's permission, was then invested in such things as seemed necessary at the moment. But the big days of vacation were such as were given over to excursions. The big city had a number of beautiful parks, one with a fairly acceptable zoo and the other large one on the lake front. What an excitement it was, to be sure, to hear father say, some evening: "If it doesn't rain to-morrow, we shall all go to the park." At such times Jimmie had all he could do to keep from squealing and shouting with delight. It was not only the car-ride which counted at such times, but the opportunity to spend the greater part of the day in beautiful woods, with well-kept walks, and, above all, to have lunch out in the open.

What child is there that cannot eat at least twice as much at a picnic in the open as at home, at the table? Older people, somehow, like to sit upright at a civilized table, with the foods served on clean dishes and in the most appetizing manner. But on picnic day the value of the food becomes the greater the more ants have found their way into the pie and cake, and the more yellow-jackets have sought out the jelly glass. Moreover, the little sticks and pieces of grass that find their way into the food seem to give added zest to the whole meal.

When the children had chased around for an hour or two, they usually came back to the tree which had been designated as the gathering point, only to clamor for something to eat. Nor did it help matters any that mother protested: "Why, children, it's hardly past eleven." From every side the cry arose, growing shortly into a chorus of pleading: "Mother, we're hungry. We want to eat." Who could long withstand such begging?!

In some respects a trip to one of the large parks on the lake, front was still more interesting. There were just as many beautiful spots in these parks, and the city took pains to make the lake front particularly attractive. Jimmie never got tired of walking along the retaining wall, where the waves came rolling in such long and where they tumbled over the rocks in endless succession. And what beautiful flowers were to be found in the wild flower section, where the city had gathered all the specimens that were native to this section of the State! What strange tales the ships told as they moved along so stately, only to disappear beyond the horizon!

Sometimes it was possible for the pastor to have a Sunday free, although he rarely enjoyed the full release of a vacation, and then he would take some of the children for a lake trip. How they enjoyed the ride down the harbor and through one of the openings of the break-water! When the weather was not windy, Jimmie loved to sit at the very bow of the boat and to watch the water spurting up on either side. Sometimes, indeed, it was not nearly so interesting, namely, when the wind was blowing hard and the waves came bounding along with a cheerfulness which was somewhat upsetting. One trip particularly Jimmie remembered for many a long day, for sister and he became violently seasick. How

the poor stewards were kept busy supplying the many needs of the unfortunate ones! Jimmie lay in a corner, trying to smile at his father, who had his sea-legs and suffered no discomfort.

"Do you suppose that I shall die soon, father?" he wanly asked. And father had all he could do to keep from laughing at the woe-begone expression of the sick lad, whose troubles were naturally forgotten almost as soon as his feet touched the solid ground once more. The outstanding feature of the summer vacation, as a rule, was a visit in the country. In the early years a parsonage at a distance of some four miles was the goal of this recreation trip. It meant that two of the boys set out some Monday morning early, either to walk the entire distance, or to take the car to the end of the line and then to hike the rest of the way. They were, as a rule, not loaded down very heavily, having only a number of extra blouses and trousers and some suits of underwear in a basket. What a relief it was, after the rather dusty trip, to reach their goal! The property of the country congregation was almost ideally located, at a crossroads, with the church and parsonage on one side of the road, and the school and the teachers' dwelling on the other. The road near the church was lined with magnificent maples, and the parsonage was almost hidden behind masses of climbing roses and hollyhocks. What fun it was to meet the boys and to join in their games! There was so much room out there, with the pastures and wheat fields extending in every direction but one, and that taken up by an orchard, which bore some of the finest apples to be found anywhere.

Time never hung heavy on the hands of Jimmie and the other boys while they were out at the country parsonage. For one thing, they had more than a half-mile to go to get the neighbor's cows from the pasture, and the road offered endless possibilities for diversion and amusement. There was a profusion of wild flowers, especially wild roses, and occasionally one could find the nest of a goldfinch. In the morning, when the cows were driven to the pasture at about six o'clock, the boys never took the road back, but circled around through the woods, always on the lookout for adventures. Sometimes such adventures came to them at the most unexpected moment. Coming home from a distant neighbor's late one moonlight night, three of the boys were strolling along in the

most unconcerned way, when suddenly they espied in the middle of the road ahead of them a pretty little cat. Jimmie was very much interested and was ready to investigate the beautiful creature, but the country boys, wise in the lore of their neighborhood, held him back. The little wood pussy, secure in the knowledge that its unpleasant perfume would effectually keep people away, sat in the road for some ten or fifteen minutes before it finally ambled away through a meadow and permitted the boys to continue on their way.

But the most fun was a fishing-trip. One morning the master of the parsonage announced "You may all get ready to go fishing today, for I have arranged for Uncle Ben to meet us down at the river." Now, the river was about six miles away, and the boys had rarely had the treat of even seeing the beautiful stream. They started out early and with great baskets of supplies, the intention being that they would stay for dinner and supper. The pony drew his load willingly enough, but was ready, at the same time, to be unhitched and to enjoy the luscious grass that grew by the river's edge. Meanwhile the fishermen went about their business with an earnestness which did credit to their good intentions. Lunch was eaten with a vim, which left nothing to be desired. Jimmie was keenly enjoying every minute of the time. He found the canal which bridged the river just below their fishing-place especially interesting, and he shouted with delight when a canal-boat came along in the early afternoon. All were so intent upon the business at hand that they had neglected to watch the weather. Suddenly they were startled by the rumbling of thunder. A heavy bank of clouds was moving up behind the trees. Thinking that this meant nothing but a passing shower, the director of the party had all the boys seek the shelter of some willows near by. But the expectation was not fulfilled. When the storm proper had thundered past, it was followed by a steady downpour which made ready to continue all the afternoon and the night. There was nothing to do but to hitch up and go back home.

But here a difficulty presented itself. The pony had been willing enough to pull the spring wagon on the way out, when the roads were good. But now the rain had soaked the ground, and the poor animal found it increasingly difficult to draw the load. After

about two miles volunteers were called for who would be ready to walk the rest of the way home. Jimmie and one of the parsonage boys volunteered, for they felt that they could hardly become any wetter than they were at that moment. So out they piled into the soft mud and let the rain soak the few garments they wore until they clung to their bodies like rags. At that they reached the parsonage only an hour after the others had arrived. And the strangest thing was that not one of them caught as much as the slightest cold as the result of their outing.

In later years, when the friends of the country parsonage had moved away, Jimmie's father found another place for him and Ned to spend a few weeks of the summer vacation. This was at the home of a milkman who lived down in the river valley oil as beautiful a place as could be found for miles around. Here were interesting things to be found indeed; for not only was the dairy itself worth visiting, but the great barns with their many fine cows attracted the boys time and again. But the finest place, in their estimation, was a hill which rose just behind the house. It was overgrown with blackberry vines, but there were paths leading through this maze up to the very summit of the hill. Here two rail fences met, forming a corner which could easily be arranged for a most comfortable seat. Here the boys would sit for hours discussing things in which they were interested and watching the various birds which delighted in the tangle of bushes and trees. Far down the river themselves one could see the first bridges of the city, and in the distance hung the pall of smoke which marked the manufacturing districts.

Nor was this all that Jimmie's vacations brought him, for it so happened that there was a recess of a few days in the fall, about the time when the various nuts were ripe. To go out to the country for a few days, when Indian summer has wrought its magic spell, is in itself a treat. But to have a place to go where one was made welcome and told to gather all the nuts that one wanted was an experience not easily forgotten. Jimmie could never quite get over his first deep surprise at the strange burs of the chestnuts. How safe and secure the sweet nuts were in their furry covering, and how careful one had to be in opening the burs! Almost as marvelous were the hazelnuts in their copses. They were pretty hard to get, at that, and it was not easy to carry a load back to the farmhouse,

especially if one had also walnuts and hickory nuts to take home. But the satisfaction of having a large supply of delicious nuts outweighed every consideration of ease, and the winter evenings brought the still greater satisfaction of enjoying the rich kernels brought home with such pleasure.

## Chapter 8. THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF WINTER

Since it was a Northern State in which the family was now living, the winters were usually of a kind to make one feel the cold, at least for a few months. The first heavy frost came in September, and it was a pleasure to go out into the woods during the Indian Summer and to see the gorgeous colors which autumn had painted on the elms, the maples, and the oaks. There was an irresistible fascination, also, about a visit to the woods at this time of the year. Early in the morning the hoarfrost might still be lying on the hills and the wind blow from the heights with a very distinct chill. But hardly had the sun lifted his face above the horizon when his warm rays sent out a most pleasant feeling of comfort. Jimmie loved to walk through the woods on such a day. If there was a slight breeze, the many strings of spider's films floated across the path like the daintiest silk. And if there was no wind, one could hear the leaves drop down, one by one, until they formed a thick layer, through which one liked to march with a swishing sound.

But it was not long before the wild geese went honking toward the South, and even the last of the summer birds silently flitted along the roads in the same direction. The ice along the edge of creeks and ponds would increase in thickness from day to day, so that the favorite places of Jimmie and his companions would soon offer hopes of early skating.

It is true that the climate was equalized and stabilized to some extent by the lake near by, and yet one might expect snowstorms even in November. How quickly the entire aspect of nature was changed by such a storm! Jimmie would come into the kitchen in the evening with his cheeks glowing from the wind.

"The wind is blowing from the northeast," he would say, "and I can feel it through my woolen jacket."

In the evening he would take one last look at the weather and would probably find that the first flakes were flying. The next morning everything would be covered with a white mantle, and Jimmie would go out to the shed in order to look after his sled.

Mother, on her part, would go into the closet under the stairway and fetch the overshoes and the rubbers for the whole family. As far as stockings and mittens were concerned, she was always busy with a pair for one of the youngsters, for her knitting needles rarely had a rest.

There were some fine ponds in the fields not far from the parsonage, and these served, as a rule, for all ordinary afternoons when the ice was strong enough to permit sliding. Nor was there any danger connected with this pastime, for none of the children would ever have gone down beyond their knees.

It was when the December storms had brought the permanent covering of snow that the real winter sports began. Since there were no regulation sidewalks anywhere in that section of the city, except on the business streets, it was almost impossible to keep the paths free from snow. As a result one could go sleigh-riding almost anywhere, and the children took turns pulling one another up and down the street. Still more fun it was to find a small hill in a near-by field and to coast for a hundred feet or more.

Winter came on in earnest just before Christmas, continuing with fair severity through the months of January and February. Sometimes the snowfall was very heavy and the drifts unusually deep. It was then that Jimmie contrived to have the most fun -out of the season. Coming home from school the boys would find a drift some six to eight feet deep, and they thought nothing was quite so exciting as to dive through such a hill from a higher spot. The arrangements for this pastime were simple, for every boy tied his muffler around his neck over his coat, pulled down his cap as far as he could get it, and then jumped. Of course, one looked like a snowman after such a stunt, and it was necessary to brush a great deal before all the evidences of such a dive were removed. The place which was hardest to deal with were the woolen stockings, for the snow would cling to the outside with fierce tenacity. More than once Jimmie sneaked into the house and behind the big base burner before mother had a chance to ask questions, for she was unpleasantly inquisitive at such times, and she did not always approve of some of the rougher stunts which Jimmie pulled off.

Shortly after the beginning of the new year came the time for building snow forts, usually at the time of the "January thaw." It was then that one could roll snow- balls of almost any size, and when these were piled up according to all the rules of the game, they formed a wall so solid that it was almost like stone. When the cold weather set in again, one could pour water over the fort and thus add materially to its firmness. Great battles were fought in the back yard, and father found it necessary to make a rule that no fort could be erected nearer to the house than thirty feet, for the snowballs often flew wide of their mark and endangered the peace and prosperity of the windows on that side of the house. Sometimes the feud would wax so fierce that the opposing parties challenged each other to a fight out in the open, that is, in the field near by, where no windows were near. In this case the party which was first driven across a designated boundary was declared the loser. How Jimmie and Ned enjoyed these battles, although they would often come home literally plastered with snow, so that it was necessary to thaw off practically all the clothes.

Very cold weather was not frequent, but polar waves did come once or twice every winter, and then it meant that one must be careful about, taking chances at having frozen fingers or frozen fingers and toes. Jimmie never forgot one trip which he made with the thermometer at 18 degrees below zero and a miniature blizzard coming along at about forty miles an hour. Little sister needed her milk, and so Jimmie started out, not only with his usual overcoat and heavy cap, but also with two pairs of mittens and with a fascinator tied around his head. In spite of all that the cold seemed to penetrate to his very marrow, and it was only by exerting all his strength that he reached home again. The milk had partly frozen even then, just as had the tears on Jimmie's eyelashes.

About this time the boys always made ready the coasting places along the sides of the draws or "gullies" which were found throughout that section of the city. One needed to be sure in guiding his sled if one wanted to go down one of the steeper of these places, for the one who lost control of his sled was sure to slide down on whatever part of his body he landed as he flew from his sled. After some days such a slide would be like ice and the sleds would gain a momentum which would carry them far up the opposite side of the

draw. It took skilful steering to keep from upsetting, and since Jimmie always wore down the tips of his shoes as he lay on his stomach, he invented a covering which was intended to save the tips; but he lost it so often in the excitement of the game that he finally abandoned his invention. Skating lasted for several months during the winter, and while the ponds near home served during the weeks before Christmas, the boys felt that they needed a larger field of operations. And this was found at not too great a distance. Down by the river some large ice companies had their ice-houses and ponds, and they had no objections if the children used these ponds for skating, as long as they were not cutting ice on that particular pond. Jimmie had not had his skates more than a week when he tried his luck down on the "flats," as the ponds were called. He soon found that this was an undertaking different from that of taking a few strokes on a small pond. Here one had to strike out or be in danger of being run over by the, other skaters. As a matter of fact he came down on the lee occasionally with a crack which caused him to see stars of every color. But eventually he learned to be an average skater, and then he had the time of his young life.

Running parallel with the river was the canal, and this canal made an ideal place for skating. The ice was usually of the very finest kind, and there was an unwritten law that all skaters must stay on the right side. Nor was hockey playing permitted except on the mill-ponds, which were found from time to time. This canal was a regular highway in those days, for some of the skaters would start out early in the morning, taking their lunch with them, and skate for miles down the canal. Toward evening one might see them come back again, somewhat tired after their exertion, and yet full of enthusiasm for the glorious sport. Jimmie found that his skating not only strengthened his ankles, but his lungs as well, and he kept it up for many a long year after he no longer saw the "flats" and the canal which was near them.

But winter also had its sorrows, and Jimmie could not escape them entirely. Of course, the great majority of the children in school were bothered more or less with colds, and coughing and sniffing went on more or less during the entire winter. But it was toward the end of winter that the more serious complaints made themselves conspicuous. Chief among these was the grippe, and it

ordinarily went through the whole family, as the parsonage mother used to say. At such times mother's room as well as the sitting room were converted into hospital rooms, for the fever took hold of the youngsters in a most disheartening way, and it was wise to be prepared for all possibilities. The worst attack was usually over in a few days, but while it lasted, things looked pretty blue. One Sunday morning Jimmie came running home from church, with the tears streaming down his face.

"Mother," he panted, as he opened the door and staggered in, "it hurts. My head hurts, and my feet are heavy, and my stomach hurts, and everything hurts."

Mother saw that it was a pretty severe attack, and so she lost no time in bundling the boy into bed, with all the compresses which he needed to take away all the aches and pains of which he complained. For a day or two the fever was rather high, and the boy was delirious a part of the time, but on the fourth day he managed a wan smile, for the headache had left him entirely, and he was only very tired. But how those youngsters could eat when they were once more in a position to sit down at the table with the rest! The sunken cheeks filled out to their former roundness, and the rich color of health returned to them in a measure which was almost alarming.

Some of the minor contagious diseases were a regular picnic at the parsonage, especially a light attack of the measles and a similar visitation of chicken pox. All the little ones were afflicted at the same time, and since they were not at all seriously ill, they certainly afflicted their mother when the first fever was past. The rooms had to be kept warm, of course, and the warmth caused the eruptions to itch. What a time there was keeping those youngsters occupied! An attack of the whooping-cough, which took hold of all the children except Jimmie, was not nearly so funny. Baby Ruth, who by this time had returned from the prairie, had a very severe case, the after-effects of which were noticeable late in the summer.

But, on the whole, the parsonage was fortunate in escaping a great many severe afflictions which other families were coping with, and the parents often reminded the children that they ought to

be very thankful to their heavenly Father for this proof of His kindness and love.

## Chapter 9. AT CHRISTMASTIME.

All the great festival seasons of the Church were times of outstanding happiness in the parsonage family. Even Pentecost was celebrated by having flowers in great profusion on the dining-room table, in agreement with an old custom which emphasized the happiness of the season. At this time also the children sang some of the beautiful songs which were practised in school, so that their fresh young voices mingled with the singing of the birds, and their prayers rose up like perfumed incense, together with that of the lilacs and the early roses and peonies.

Easter, quite naturally, caused a great deal of excitement among the younger children. Mother soon told them the origin and the meaning of the Easter eggs, but this did not in any way interfere with their interest in the colored beauties or in the nests which were carefully made for the mythical Easter rabbit. Each child had its own treasure of excelsior and colored paper, saved from various packages which came during the last part of the winter. This treasure was carefully hoarded for the day before Easter. If mother then decided that the weather warranted the building of Easter nests outside, the youngsters were soon busily engaged in that very important occupation, even taking care to cover the nest with small sheets of paper, lest the dew moisten the center and cause the dye of the eggs to fade. It usually fell to Jimmie's lot to get the eggs which were used in this most important manner, and he was not a little proud of the fact that he knew all about the secrets of Easter, even if he was not permitted to take part in the rite. He found some satisfaction, however, in occasionally buying a few pennies' worth of candy eggs and smuggling these out to the nests late in the evening. The great fun came on Easter morning, especially if the weather was warm and bright. Just as soon as mother gave the signal, the children, all of them dressed for a long time before, tiptoed down the steps, in order not to wake father, and then hurried out to gather the beautiful eggs, which were then divided by mother according to the number of those entitled to such rights, that is, all the children who were not yet confirmed. On Easter morning, of

course, no child thought of eating one of the eggs from the nests outside, especially not if there happened to be many "bronze ones" in the lot, for these were particularly prized by them all. Mother always saw to it that all the members of the family had eggs in sufficient amounts on Easter morning. Occasionally one of the children determined to save an Easter egg till next year, the result being that on one of the first hot days in June a penetrating smell came from some box or trunk in the bedroom, and a quick search revealed an egg which had turned "awfully bad", as Baby Ruth had it.

But, although Pentecost and Easter were interesting and exciting enough, Christmas was the outstanding festival of the year. This was due to various causes. In the first place, the first snow was generally hailed as the reminder of Christmas, for the great festival and snow were inseparably connected in the minds of the children. In the second place, the Advent season so naturally suggested the idea of Christmas, for every song and every sermon reminded the children of the birthday of their Lord. And, in the third place, every day in school meant Christmas over and over again. Christmas was the one festival in the year when a special children's service was held in church, and all the teachers devoted much time to the preparation for this event. Not only were the old Christmas songs sung over again and again, but a number of recitations were memorized, also questions and answers to be recited on Christmas Eve. What an excitement that was every afternoon at about three o'clock, when these rehearsals were held! The nearer Christmas came, the more restless the children became, and often the patience of the teachers was taxed beyond the breaking point.

On the last day of school before the Christmas holidays the public rehearsal in church took place in the presence of the pastor and the members of the board. Sometimes the tree was already standing in the corner of the church auditorium, and the children could hardly be kept quiet long enough to sing their songs. It was only when the principal threatened: "Now if you children cannot curb your restlessness, we shall have to go back to school for another day," was it possible to finish the rehearsal.

Jimmie was especially anxious to get home after this last rehearsal, for this was always the day when mother baked the cookies for Christmas. The German gingerbread had been prepared several weeks before, for this was like the fruitcake it had to ripen before it was really good. But the smaller cookies, especially the "pfeffernuesse," were made during the week following the fourth Sunday in Advent, and it was here that the boy was permitted to help, partly by shelling the peanuts which were scattered through the dough, partly in making ready the almonds and walnuts placed on the larger cookies, partly in rolling out the dough and cutting the small pieces as they went into the pan. And when they came out of the oven and were placed in large crocks, Jimmie was just as proud as his weary mother was.

During the weeks before Christmas the children were naturally very much excited about the presents which they might expect for Christmas. But one thing was distinctly understood in the parsonage, namely, that no gifts were made by "Santa Claus" or by any similar figment of a perverted imagination. The pastor told his children that "Santa Claus" was a peculiar caricature of an alleged saint of the fourth century, to whose story had been added various legendary material, chiefly from heathen sources, which had no place in a Christian home. The parsonage children, accordingly, spoke only of the coming of the Christchild, for they were told that all the gifts at Christmastime, whether given through parents, relatives, or friends, are in truth gifts of God's goodness, and the reason why Christians have retained that fine custom of giving presents on Christmas Day was to remind them of the greatest and most wonderful Christmas present, the Christchild in the manger.

This fact in no way interfered with the anticipatory joy of the children. On the contrary, the younger children especially, who thought of all things heavenly in terms of their every-day lives, were sure that the Christchild sends special angels to bring the tree and the gifts. What days of anxiety and hope those immediately preceding the solemn festives were! Mother's room was always the Christmas room, and it had become the custom to lock the doors of this room some four or five days before Christmas. How careful the children were not to disturb the Christmas angels, who might be at work in the locked room! How unusually quiet and obedient they

were at this time, how willing to run on errands, how industrious in attending to their various little chores!

Jimmie had a double portion to take care of at this time, for he was now growing up, and there were many things which he could take care of for his mother. Many of these little duties involved the need of secrecy, and he was mighty proud that he was entrusted with some business ordinarily taken care of by the grownups. Although he had at one time, being sick with the grippe just before Christmas, seen who were the special helpers of the Christchild in the parsonage, he had managed to keep his secret to himself and took great pains to throw the veil of secrecy over all the preparations for the festival. The year that he was permitted to help with the frosting of the animal cookies he almost burst with joyful pride. In the evening, before supper was served, the little sisters would come to him and beg to be rocked, while he sang to them all the beautiful Christmas songs which he had learned in school.

It was not long before Jimmie had some special secrets of his own in connection with Christmas. He did not have enough money to get presents for the older members of the family, and he was ashamed to give them something that he had made himself. But it was a different matter as far as the little ones were concerned. one year mother gave him an idea, and he promptly put this into execution. There was a box in the basement which was just big enough to be made into a doll house of two stories. If one would out some holes for windows, paper the interior nicely with ends of paper which were left over, and then paint the outside, it would be just beautiful.

"But, mother," said Jimmie, "will you help me a little? I have only thirty cents, and there ought to be some furniture in the doll house."

Mother promised to help, and so Jimmie could go to work. It was not easy for him to manipulate the clumsy tools, the only ones which the parsonage boasted, and he had much trouble with a scroll-saw which he had to borrow in order to out the windows, but on the Saturday before Christmas the house itself was ready, carefully hidden behind a stack of periodicals in a large case upstairs. Then came the excitement of buying some doll furniture. It

meant walking to town and back, a distance of more than two miles each way, and it required the most careful shopping in the various large stores; but at last he found a set exactly as he wanted it. There were only enough pieces for the little sitting-room, but, Jimmie got some discarded cigar boxes, out of which he, whittled and built a little kitchen set. Mother gave him money to buy a tiny tin stove. What a wonderful doll house it was, now that it was finished! Jimmie could, not help but notice some tiny imperfections in a number of places, but mother was so generous and encouraging in her praise that he felt well satisfied indeed. And he, felt still more so when the little ones accepted the doll house with every indication of the highest approval. As a matter of fact, his home-made present proved to be stronger than many of the things that had been bought in the stores, for it lasted for more than a year, surely an unusual length of time for a Christmas present to little children.

By the time Christmas Eve came, the children were in a perfect flurry of excitement. Everything was ready. The German gingerbread was piled high in the pans, the smaller cakes overflowed the five-gallon jars, the coffee cakes gave off a sweet odor of cinnamon, and the holiday sausages hung in a long row in the summer kitchen. The mysterious Christmas room became more mysterious with every moment, for could not the children notice the smell of spruce as they passed by the door of the room?

When the early darkness fell on Christmas Eve, the children watched to see how quickly the angels lit the stars, for these always glowed with special brightness for the great festival. There was an early supper and then the quick trip to church, whose bright interior invited people from far and near at an early hour. How the youngsters did sing on that evening, pouring out the full gladness of their overflowing hearts in the joyful anthems of Christmastide! There were always two immense pine trees in church, and they were literally covered with candles, for this was before the time of electric lights. With two men at hand to watch the trees no accident ever happened, although the quick eyes of the children often discovered a small blaze before the men took notice of it. How solemn the Christmas gospel sounded as it was chanted on that night, and how joyful the peals of the organ rang forth, as though it

felt the need of doing the very best for such an outstanding occasion.

Before nine o'clock the children's service came to a close, and hundreds of children had received their small bag of candy and nuts, and possibly a picture or a small book. How they hurried down to the schoolrooms to slip into their coats and wraps! In many homes the children's gifts were distributed after the children's service on Christmas Eve, and therefore they could hardly wait until they reached home. The rule of the parsonage was that two hours of excitement was enough for children who were to remain awake the next day in church, and so Jimmie and the little ones hurried home as fast as they could, in order to jump into bed as soon as possible and to have the eyes tightly closed in sleep before the Christmas angels arrived for the last touches in the Christmas room.

Christmas morning was the one day in the year, except Easter Day, when the parsonage children did not have to be called twice; in fact, they did not have to be called at all, for they had been awake ever since five o'clock, anxiously waiting for father or mother to go down to the sitting-room and shake down the ashes in the base burner, for that was the signal to get up. How they scrambled to get into their clothes and to assemble at the head of the stairs! Jimmie usually laid his clothes so exactly in order that he merely had to step into them, draw them up, and fasten them in place, and so he usually was sitting on the top steps before the sisters were ready. When father joined the group, they could march down the steps. A few chords were struck on the piano, and then the voices of the children rang out:

Sing forth with gladsome voice,  
With grateful hearts rejoice;  
All the world's Salvation  
Sleeps in a manger bed,  
The Hope of ev'ry nation  
Laid there His royal head:  
Great, eternal God!

The entire hymn was sung as they stood before the door of the Christmas room, and very often a number of stanzas of Luther's

beautiful cradle hymn were sung as well. And then the door was opened, and the children entered the Christmas fairyland. Their eyes shone with a luster vying with that from the light of the candles. The little ones hung back with the marvel of it all, until they saw their dolls and some of the larger toys; then they rushed forward with shouts of joy. The presents were displayed on a large table, on which the place of each child was carefully marked. Useful gifts were in the great majority, stockings, mittens, gloves, wrist warmers, caps, and other wearing apparel. Next in order came books, for Jimmie was not the only lover of books in the family, much as the rest tried to accuse him of this failing. But games were by no means absent, usually such as required some little application of thought. Sometimes there was an unusual gift, as when friends presented the parsonage mother with a fine set of china, or when all the children together received a splendid sled, the card gravely announcing: "For all the children, for strenuous use!"

The entire week of Christmas was a holiday, and mother's room was open from early in the morning till late at night. Perhaps the coziness of this room was increased by the open fireplace, where a large log was usually burning, with much crackling of smaller branches of spruce and pine, which were added from some mysterious source and filled the entire room with the smell of evergreens. Jimmie thought it huge fun to lie on a rug near the window, with a pillow for the elbows, and to devour all the story-books that had come for the whole family. At least twice during the holidays, which extended to Epiphany (January 6), there was company in the parsonage, some of the friends or relatives coming for the afternoon, and sometimes staying for the evening. It was then that the stores of nuts from the autumn expeditions were brought up from the cellar, to be enjoyed by all the youngsters. There the older ones sat in a row in the kitchen, each with one of mother's old sad irons in his lap. Then the hammers and hatchets and pokers of the household were pressed into service, and heaps and heaps of toothsome nut meats were devoured, together with stacks of apples and cookies, and other goodies too numerous to mention. It was really a most remarkable thing that there were not more cases of stomach ache about the last of the year; but the children's capacity was most remarkable, and their romps out in the

show or on the pond near by quickly ate up the great stores of food in their system.

Sometimes the tree served till Epiphany, being lit then for the last time. But in any event the candles were in use on New Year's Eve, either before or after church. That was always a solemn evening in the parsonage for, though the blessings of the past year were duly reviewed on that day, the flight of time and the coming of eternity was considered in the prayers of this evening. The children were duly impressed, although they did not, as yet, understand the full significance of the references. It certainly caused them to "rejoice with trembling" and laid the foundation for an earnestness which stood there in good stead when the seriousness of life overtook them.

School took up again after the Christmas holidays, and one day the children came home to find that mother's room was once more just the plain room which it was for eleven and a half months in the year, and the Christmas tree, robbed of all its finery, stood or lay outside in the snow. This meant that a pedestal had to be built in order to have the tree properly mounted for the rest of the winter. Sometimes it was planted on the highest point of one of the children's snow-forts and witnessed many a grim battle. But when spring once more came along and the tree, had become brown and dry, it delighted the children for the last time when its branches were used for fuel in the kitchen stove and its last bit of perfume filled the old parsonage.

## Chapter 10. MOTHER, THE SISTERS, AND NED.

All true mothers everywhere belong in a class by themselves among humanity. Their station is such as to require of them every form of self-denial and humble service, not to speak of a love which is stronger than death. It is no wonder that the Bible itself can find no more outstanding comparison for the love of God than that of a mother to her children.

But in the midst of the special class of mothers the parsonage mothers are usually in a class by themselves. This is not only because they ordinarily, and gratefully, have a large band of their own to take care of and to establish them in humble service, but also because there are so many demands made upon the time and the service of the parsonage mothers by the many people in every parish who need the gentle understanding and the loving sympathy which the true pastor's wife knows how to give. The old and the poor and the lonely seem just naturally to turn to one who seems to be so ready to have the true Christian sympathy with them, and they feel that their troubles, whatever they may be, are safe in the keeping of the pastor's wife.

It was to this class of understanding wives that the parsonage mother belonged. And it seemed to Jimmie that she was learning to be more gentle and more kind from day to day. Motherhood had glorified wifedom in her case, and the fact that she was a pastor's wife gave her an added touch of an understanding of human wants and human needs such as few people can use in a proper way. It was of such as she was that it has rightly been said:

O glorious motherhood!  
To bear the flame of life from age to age,  
To write the story of mankind on living page,  
To have a part in God's creative plan,  
To be a wife, a mother be, to man:  
That's motherhood.

The parsonage mother kept the proper balance between the three: her Church and her Savior coming first, then her husband and her children, and her kitchen and her household in the third place. She belonged to the "friends" of the Savior, such as do not show their religion with loud ostentation, but whose life is bound up with that of the Lord. She knew that Jesus was her personal Redeemer, and the occasional remarks which she made concerning her spiritual life showed that her fellowship with Him was not forced or artificial, but came forth from her faith in an inevitable growth which found her living in good works. The Christian religion does not need fifty-foot advertising posters where such as she are found, for their whole life is one constant proof for the truth and the power of the Gospel of Christ.

One of the great secrets of her power over her children lay in her evening devotions. Of course, the parsonage had regular family worship after breakfast and after supper, and all the children were in attendance as a matter of course. The pastor read either a chapter from the Bible with some appropriate comments or a short exposition of some Bible stories, or a few paragraphs from some good book of devotion, and, of course, the usual morning and evening prayers. These hours of worship became so self-evident to the children that they later continued them as a matter of course. But mother's short bed-time devotion had a character all its own. All the children that were at home always took part in this little service. Sometimes a stanza from a hymn of the season was sung, but the usual hymn was that beautiful stanza from the hymn by Paul Gerhardt "Now rest beneath night's shadows," which began: "Lord Jesus, who dost love me." Then followed the entire anthem: "Now the light has gone away," and after this came the individual prayers of the children. If any one of the children was troubled by some matter weighing down heavily on mind or spirit, this was the time when it could be brought to mother's attention. And, as Jimmie found, the words of reproof or of admonition or of consolation were always just right, they always brought about the right attitude in the youngster who was troubled. Such evening devotions at the knees of Christian mothers have kept thousands of children in the right path.

The parsonage mother was not a large and powerful woman, she never exceeded one hundred pounds by a great deal, and very often she was below that feather-weight. In after years Jimmie found no difficulty about lifting her up and carrying her like some little child. But her will power and her force of character more than made up for her smallness of body. All the children knew, and that very definitely, who was boss in the kitchen, and also in the sitting-room when father was not at home. She did not use the whip often, but when she did find occasion to apply it, she had in mind the sound maxim: Spare the rod, and spoil the child. Disobedience, meanness, and sometimes an overabundance of animal spirits were properly curbed. If she stated a rule or gave a command, this was not merely on the books, but it was put into practise immediately, and with telling effect. More than once, when Jimmie had been in mischief, he begged Ned: "Don't tell mother, and I promise I'll be more careful in the future."

Jimmie had special reasons for regarding his mother very highly and for trying his best to please her. When he was a tiny baby, she had him on her lap, and he was playing and squirming and kicking and fighting, just as any healthy baby will. But this time his little fingernails passed over mother's face, leaving a tiny scratch over the bridge of her nose. There must have been some poisonous matter under his nails, for the scratch resulted in a very painful and unsightly sore, which placed an extra burden upon patient mother for many a long year. Sometimes thoughtless persons half playfully accused Jimmie of having caused all this trouble, and it wounded him deeply to be considered the cause of such a disfiguring blotch on the dear face of his mother. It was only when he became old enough to know that he was not really guilty of the evil spot that he was somewhat consoled.

The parsonage mother was always busy. Usually she was the first one to be up in the morning and, as a rule, breakfast was almost ready before the youngsters tumbled out. The rule was that they must be present when father and mother sat down at the table, otherwise there was no breakfast for the guilty one. Mother used to say: "The family should remain together as long as possible, for all too soon the children are scattered to the four winds." The work of the household was always carefully planned in advance, and the

general outline of the week's duties was pretty well known to every one in the house, so that all could govern themselves accordingly. When the baking and cooking and scrubbing and washing and cleaning and ironing was done, the parsonage mother could not persuade herself to be idle. After the supper dishes were out of the way and all the children gathered about the sitting-room table to do their home work, it was she who directed and supervised all the efforts. Whenever time and circumstances permitted, she had one of the children read from some good magazine or book for the whole family circle. Thus she could correct faulty reading, herself have the benefit of the story, and train her children in the choice of good literature. And even then her hands were not idle, for she was either knitting stockings or mittens, or she was mending some of the many stockings and garments which were taken from the line and placed directly in the mending basket, in order that no torn garment would be placed in the bureau drawers upstairs. She was a methodical woman, if there ever was one.

But at no time did the parsonage mother stand out more beautifully by her unselfish example than when sickness entered the home. Her hands were hard and calloused from constantly toiling for others, but there were no softer hands in all the world when one of the children was sick. No matter how restless a little body was, throwing itself back and forth with the severe heat of some fever, it was but necessary for mother to lay her hand on the feverish brow, and the little patient was quiet. Often, when the tears were flowing with the amount of the pain, a few strokes of her cool hand and a few soft words spoken as only she could speak them brought instant relief. Sometimes, when an epidemic of some children's disease struck the parsonage and one after the other of the children took sick, she hardly had time to change her clothes, and her eyes became round and dark-ringed with watchfulness, but she was ever the same patient, kind mother in taking care of the needs of all.

"It hurts," Jimmie would complain. "It hurts, right here." And he would point out the place which ached most. But mother soothed him. "Never mind, son, we'll soon take care of that."

And then her gentle massaging would come in, or a bandage or compress, or a fine hot tea to break the power of a cold, and it was not long before the little patient was as well as ever.

Sister Doris was like mother. The boisterous or tom-boy part had not entered into her makeup. She was invariably, and almost continually, gentle and kind, sweet-tempered and mild. She was a good pupil at school, and her record often served as a spur to Jimmie; she was inclined to follow the line of least resistance. Somehow she never figured largely in the games and sports of the family. When Jimmie and Ned and the little sisters were tearing around outside, or when some of the neighbors' children called for them to take them out to the field for a game of ball, Doris preferred to stay at home, either quietly helping her mother or sitting down in the cozy corner of the sitting-room, where she spent the time with a good book. But she was a good hiker and would not readily stay at home when some one proposed a long walk, especially into the country. She was very fond of flowers and always found the largest cowslips and the finest blood lilies. In her gentle way she often kept Jimmie from getting into mischief, for they went to school together for years. All too soon gentle Doris was taken away, and they laid her in God's acre one beautiful day in July, when she was just flowering into womanhood.

The little sisters, from Baby Ruth down, were Jimmie's special charge. In summer especially he wheeled them in the buggy or took them out into the field to gather dandelions and buttercups. They were roly-poly enough, but not very strong, and the rough games of some of the older children did not appeal to them. It was necessary, therefore, to find other ways of amusing them, and this Jimmie succeeded in doing by means of buildings in the back yard. They liked to play house, and the big packing-cases in the wood shed were ideal for just that purpose. Then, also, they would often play by the hour in the sand pile, for, with the older children at school, they had the entire corner to themselves. They also took a great deal of delight in going window-shopping along the nearest business street, especially a few weeks before Easter, when many stores had not only beautiful and colorful pictures, but some also had live bunnies in the window. What fun it was to watch the neat

animals hop about in the straw! And when they sat up to eat a piece of carrot, the littlest baby would clap her hands in glee.

Little Ned soon became Brother Ned, although he never reached the stickiness of Jimmie. Still the two brothers became good pals. For years they shared the same bed and also the same secrets of various kinds. They had their collections of stones and of stamps, and they had their pirate's hoard under a board in the coal shed, where no one would ever be able to find it. They also built a coop for their pigeons together, into which, alas! the rats entered, killing their finest dove. They likewise constructed a rabbit hutch, where they intended to raise young rabbits for the market. But one morning they came out to find their rabbits missing. The cats had found a weak spot in the wall of the small shed, and they had had a rich and lasting meal of two of the finest bunnies in the city.

This deed aroused the just indignation of Brother Ned. "I'll tell you what we'll do," said he to Jimmie, "when we grow up we'll build a big rabbit barn with tin, and we'll put in a hundred thousand rabbits, and no cats will get any of them."

After this disastrous experiment with live stock Jimmie and Ned, not being discouraged as yet, laid plans to get some white mice, but mother interposed with an emphatic veto. "We have far too many rats and other vermin around the place right now, and we can't afford to be eaten alive by further pests." And that settled the matter. But the pirate's hoard is most likely still beneath the third board from the south side of the coal shed floor, and a diagram will be cheerfully furnished to all such as wish to enrich themselves to the extent of one rubber ball, half a horseshoe, several pieces of colored glass, and a bit of brass ring.

## Chapter 11. JIMMIE LEAVES SCHOOL.

Childhood cannot last forever. The years rush by with startling swiftness, and before the child knows it, the days of responsibility and discretion have arrived. Jimmie had often wished for the time when he might leave the narrow confines of childhood and be looked upon as a man, but he found that it was harder to say farewell to the scenes of his childhood and to childhood ways and activities than he, had ever supposed.

He had been in the highest class in school for several years, and the teacher had taken a live interest in his progress along every line. In English, arithmetic, geography, and history he was far in advance of other children of his age. There were three others with him in the advanced section of the class, and they made use of the special advantages offered them by the teacher's kindness. They were together, also, when the special work of the catechumen classes was begun. It was a large class that year, and the pastor was much pleased with the general preparation of the children, as appeared from their recitations. Sessions of the class were held from the middle of September till Palm Sunday, five days in the week.

At first many of the children were shy and diffident, but as the lessons progressed and the meaning of many of the great truths became clear to them, their interest was quickly aroused. Many sections of the catechism, which the children had till now in no manner associated with their own faith and life, now became an open book to them. The Second Article of the Creed, particularly, was explained in great detail, so that every catechumen would know exactly in what manner Jesus became the Redeemer of all mankind.

The pastor was always very insistent upon the right understanding of the proof texts of the Bible on the part of every child. He often asked the most searching personal questions, in order to have the children think about their salvation and sanctification. One morning he had just opened the, meeting with

the usual song and a fervent prayer when he started at one end of the class, asking each child in succession: "Do you know whether you will get to heaven?" Slowly he went along the line, and more or less hesitatingly the children answered: "I don't know." Finally he reached the corner where Jimmie and his partner sat. These two boys had done some quick thinking during this time, for they were sure that they had had the answer explained to them in some previous lesson.

"Do you know whether you will get to heaven?" the question was put to him.

"Yes, such is my hope," came his answer, but somewhat hesitatingly.

"What does that mean, that you hope to be saved? Is it just a more possibility?" the pastor further asked.

But now Jimmie had found his bearings. Quick as a flash came his answer: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"That's correct, boy; just you keep that certainty in your heart, for it is based upon the eternal Word of God."

As the term drew to its close, the lessons gained in fervor, the pastor explaining especially what it means to go to the Lord's Supper, and why it is so very necessary for all communicants to examine themselves most carefully before going to the Lord's table. The children were visibly impressed, some of the more emotional girls especially showing how deeply they had been moved.

Meanwhile the class was also concerned about the decorating of the church for Palm Sunday, for one of the church organizations furnished only the palms and other potted plants. It was customary in that congregation that a long garland of evergreens was woven, into which were placed a great number of paper roses and other flowers. Custom said that the girls had to make the paper roses and that the boys had to provide the evergreens. A few days before Palm Sunday, therefore, the huskiest boys started out to get the evergreen branches. They usually arranged with some farmer a few miles from the city, who gave

them permission to cut down a number of designated small cedars and to chop off the lower branches of a few large trees. This part of the work took all morning, and the boys thoroughly enjoyed the lunch which they had carried with them.

Shortly after twelve o'clock they started back with their loads, but they found that it made quite a difference whether one was coming out with only a box of lunch to carry, or whether one was going back with some thirty pounds of evergreen twigs on his back. Still they managed to make the four or five miles before four o'clock in the afternoon, and thus had an opportunity to give some advice to the girls, who had worked on their flowers while the boys went out to the country, and who now were ready to begin on the garland. But in spite of some joking and teasing the dignity of the occasion was not harmed, for there were always a number of elderly women present to supervise and to assist.

On Saturday morning the garland was fastened in its place in church. It hung in festoons from the ceiling, and the ends on either side came down to the corners of the altar platform. From one side to the other was stretched a violet-colored banner, which bore in golden letters the inscription "Be thou faithful unto death." When the flowers had all been fastened in place, the effect was rather impressive, although Jimmie felt somewhat doubtful about some green roses which some of the girls had made. Still, the palms and the other plants banked on either side of the altar made a perfect background, and the blooming flowers which formed part of the decorations shed their fragrance over everything. Early on Sunday morning the cut flowers added their share of sweet smelling incense, particularly the Easter lilies.

The catechumens assembled in one of the schoolroom downstairs a half hour before the service began. The old pastor wanted to address a few final words of encouragement to all of them and to impress upon them the solemnity of the occasion. The boys all wore black suits, as the ancient custom required, and the girls likewise were garbed in black, for this was, at that time, the tradition in that particular congregation. When the first strains of the prelude floated down the wide stairway, the children formed in line and, under the leadership of their pastor, slowly marched up

into the auditorium, which was filled to overflowing, although the weather was extremely unpleasant, with rain that threatened drown everyone who ventured forth.

As usual, the examination of the children before the assembled congregation occupied the largest part of the time. The pastor took care to bring out just those points which were fundamental for the understanding of Christian truth, and the children tried very hard to live up to his expectations of them. For the most part their answers were given in a clear, loud voice, though in some cases he found it necessary to repeat their answers, for the voices did not carry to every part of the auditorium.

In the confirmation address the pastor brought out the spirit of the occasion in a most remarkable way. His text was: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that man take thy crown." In his own fine Scriptural way he showed the class wherein the crown of the Christians consists, who it is that strives to take it from them, and how all Christians may and shall hold it firmly against all enemies.

After the address the class of catechumens sang a song for which the organist of the congregation had written the music. It was a two-part song, and its simple harmony impressed itself so easily upon the memory that Jimmie remembered every intonation of the music for many years. Solemnly the strains rang out:

Lord, Thine fore'er to-day  
I vow to be,  
And for Thy grace I pray  
And cry to Thee;  
Lord, do not leave my side,  
My heav'nly Friend,  
Keep me, whate'er betide,  
Until the end.

The act of confirmation was performed in this manner, that the children went up by fours, each one receiving the special confirmation benediction and a memory verse. Jimmie bowed his head as he heard the words of the verse which he had been permitted to choose:

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

And when Jimmie got home and was called into his father's study, it filled him with a feeling of sacred obligation to God which he felt for many a long year, when his father laid his hand on his head in a special blessing, as he told the boy: "May God strengthen you to keep the solemn vow of your confirmation!"

That was the end of Jimmie's boyhood, for immediately after Easter he joined a class of boys who were attending special classes in a Latin school, and the carefree days of the old parsonage were behind him forever.