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# RODDY'S VICTORY

It was Saturday—a summer Saturday; the sun shone down upon the meads and pastures round Clover Farm so radiantly that every face felt bound to smile brightly in return. Every face but one, and that belonged to Roddy Lester, the eldest of the farmer's four.

"What ails my boy this fine sunshiny morning?" called out mother from the cool, sweet dimness of the dairy, where she was at work.

Roddy did not answer. He was standing in the ivy-encircled doorway of the dairy, his hands deep in his pockets, his feet shuffling to and fro, and on his face a dark, angry cloud.

"Come, Roddy, tell mother the trouble. Is it anything to do with school? Is there a punishment preparation to be done this morning?"

"No; there isn't!" Roddy roused himself at such a suspicion. "Why, mother, I told you I was moved up yesterday; don't you remember? But I'll come inside and tell you all about it."

"No! Tell me from outside all about it."

"Well, then, mother, I don't want to take the children to the meads. I want to amuse myself. And it's not fair. Saturday's a holiday, and it's my right to have it!" sullenly said Roddy.

"Your right! Perhaps so, dear! But sometimes it is our privilege to yield our rights!" quietly said mother, taking her eyes for a second off the yellowing cream to glance at the boy's gloomy face. "Who told you to take the children to the meads—father?" she asked.

"Yes, it was. He said I was to take them to the cowslip meads, and not to stir from there until he came back from market."

"And what is it you want to do instead?"

"I want to go with my net down to Butterfly Corner. There will be heaps of butterflies out this sunny day. And the other boys at school are all collecting: they have more than I have, all of them. I have only a tortoiseshell and a brimstone. O, it's a regular shame

of father!"

"Hush, dear, hush! Nothing that your kind, good father says or does can be called a shame. But I believe I can guess why he gave those orders. He knew that this is an over-busy day for me, and also that I have one of my bad headaches." Certainly mother's face gleamed out white from the dairy shadows. "And as this is market-day at Hamley Town he and old Michael would be away until dinner-time. So, you see, sonny, he has left you in charge. You are in father's place this morning to guard the farm and us all, particularly the tinies. Don't you see what an honour it is to be trusted thus?"

Something stirred in Roddy's heart at his mother's words. The best part of him suddenly came uppermost. He walked quietly away, followed by Fuzzy sniffing at his heels. And, somehow, the boy felt an inch taller as he looked round the farm. After all, what were the butterflies compared with the tinies left in his charge? "Hip, hip, hooray!" Roddy straightened himself and cheered. He had won a victory—over himself.

"Hi, Nettie! Hi, Dumps! Come along! And where's Baby? We're going to the meads, and I'll make you a fine cowslip ball to shoot the rooks with!" he shouted, and Fuzzy barked madly round as the tinies flocked out.

When they got there, what with the sun and the wind, the making of the huge cowslip ball and the little ones' joy over it, Roddy's face cleared up and was as sunshiny as the weather itself. There's nothing like giving up your own will for making the heart sing.

By-and-by, when dinner-time came, so did father. As the dog-cart drove along the high-road, Roddy and Nettie puzzled over its appearance.

"It's got a new wheel at the back, Roddy!"

But Roddy's eyes widened into a fixed stare, and his face grew very red.

"Well, boy, here you are at your post. Now I'll tell you why I wanted you to stay at home this morning. It was for this surprise. Look, my lad! For weeks back I've been in treaty for this bicycle for you. To-day I was able to close with the bargain, and it's yours!"

For a few seconds Roddy could not see: his eyes were dimmed. The good, kind father had been planning out his boy's pleasure! "O, father!" he gasped; then, "O, mother!"

"Such a beauty!" delightedly said mother.

"It's a good one; I don't know the name," father was beginning.

"I do!" put in mother. "It is the 'Victory'—Roddy's Victory!"