"Come and have a game at soldiers, Dulcie."

"I can't, Harold; don't you see I'm busy?"

"Busy writing rubbish! How you can be so silly as to waste your time like that I can't think. It isn't as if you really could write poetry, and I call it downright conceited for a girl to pretend she can. So, do leave off, there's a dear, and come and have a game. I want to try my new cannon, and you shall have first shot if you will come."

But Dulcie was offended. A week ago she had written a verse about Harold's dog, and father had said it was very good and had given her sixpence for writing it. Since then she had spent most of her spare time trying to write other verses, but this afternoon she was beginning to get a little tired of being a poetess and to long for a good game.

When Harold suggested soldiers, she really wanted to play, for she was almost as fond of boys' games as her brother was; but she thought it sounded grand to pretend she was busy. Then when Harold called her silly and conceited she grew angry and sulked.

"Do come, Dulcie; don't be cross!"

"Go away, you rude boy," replied Dulcie.

Harold tried coaxing for a little while longer, and then he went away and left his sister alone in the school-room. It was very lonely there, and before five minutes had passed Dulcie heartily regretted that she had refused Harold's offer.

"But he was horrid," she said, "and anyway he is miserable too; he can't bear playing alone."

Harold, however, was anything but miserable, for, on peeping out of the window, Dulcie saw him in the next-door garden helping the children there to make a big snow-man. He was laughing and shouting, and had evidently forgotten all about her.

A lump seemed to have suddenly risen in her throat, and as she crept back to the table two big tears fell splashing down upon the poem she had been trying to write and blotted out some of the words; then down went her head upon the paper, and in another moment she was sobbing pitifully.

It was almost dark when Harold came running up to the school-room, and, bursting open the door, cried cheerily: "Such a lark, Dulcie; just listen. Hullo," he added, "what's the matter?"

In another moment his arm was round his sister's neck and she was rubbing her tear-stained cheek against his cold rosy one.

"O, Harold," she sobbed, "I've been so miserable. I'm sorry I was so disagreeable."

"Never mind; is that all you're crying about? Well, I was horrid too: I teased you when you were writing, and I daresay your poetry is clever."

"No, it isn't," said Dulcie; "it's as stupid as stupid can be, and I'll never try to write a piece again," and with that she picked up the offending paper and dropped it into the fire.

Harold gave her a brotherly hug, for he really was glad Dulcie had come to this decision, for he had found her new accomplishment a little trying at times.

"But I haven't told you my news yet," he said. "I've been playing with the Grahams all the afternoon, and Mrs. Graham came out just now and has invited us to go there to tea and have a good game afterwards, and Tom told me there was to be a Christmas-tree. So come along and let's tell nurse, for it's time to get ready."

O, what a good time the children had that evening, and how they did laugh and play! Dulcie was amongst the merriest there, and when she and Harold went home that night, laden with toys from the Christmas-tree, she said: "Wasn't I a silly girl to sit and cry and be miserable this afternoon, when I might have been so happy?"