

Our Women and Children

Conducted by Lucille Skaggs Edwards.

PUPPY PONCE.

How He Made His Little Friends Happy.

The door flew open (Billy had forgotten to latch it) and something soft and black and silky dashed across the room and into Cicely's lap. In a second more it was off with her arithmetic book held fast between two rows of sharp white teeth.

Then this little bit of fur and frolicsomeness, spying Billy's necktie, dropped the first prize and made for the two bright dangling ends. But before anyone could even think of saying Jack Robinson, the lively little visitor had left Billy and was kissing Baby Dumpkins' chubby cheeks with a funny soft pink tongue.

No wonder the Dollivers were too much surprised to do anything but stare at the newcomer.

Oddly enough, Dumpkins, who still found talking in long sentences hard work, was the first to speak.

"Puppy pounce," said the baby, very slowly and distinctly.

And Puppy Pounce he became to the Dolliver family from that very minute. And how he did pounce! One minute it was at mother's apron strings; the next, at Billy's shoe laces and a second later there was a tug at Cicely's buttons. Then after a wild whisking and scampering around the room, he wound Billy's ball under the sofa and with a great deal of wagging of a stubby tail and much shaking of a pair of silky ears, he coaxed each Dolliver to have a game.

"Oh, please, mother, may we keep him?" Cicely begged.

"Oh, do say yes," Billy entreated.

"Puppy Pounce stay," added Dumpkins.

"But he must belong to somebody," mother reminded them. Yet Puppy Pounce seemed to belong to the Dolliver children as much as to anyone, for although the town was searched no owner was found.

"But how can we have a dog?" Mrs. Dolliver objected. "It seems to me we are a pretty busy family without taking in a frisky puppy."

"But, mother, if you'll only let him stay," Billy coaxed, "we'll help ever so much more than we do now. I'll try to remember to put my things away and shut the doors and—"

"And I'll study my arithmetic without being reminded," Cicely put in.

"And Dumpkins will stay inside the gate when mother says so, won't you, Dumpkins?" Billy added.

"Stay inside the gate," said Dumpkins.

"A puppy is a good deal of trouble," mother began.

"Oh, we'll take all the care of Puppy Pounce," the three chimed.

Puppy Pounce had been lying fast asleep in Cicely's lap during this conversation, but at the mention of his name he jumped down and went straight to Mrs. Dolliver. He drew himself up on his hind legs, his two forepaws crooked, and looked up at her with pleading eyes.

"Well," agreed mother, "he's a nice puppy, and we'll see."

Puppy Pounce was quite the pride of the whole family, he learned tricks so readily and was always ready to show off. He shook hands, played ball and hide and seek and danced on his hind legs. You can imagine what a merry playmate this silky little black puppy was.

"What would we ever do if Puppy Pounce's owner should come back," Cicely exclaimed one night as they were putting him to bed in his basket.

It was the very next day, when the four were out for a walk, or rather a run, for Puppy Pounce didn't like to walk, that something happened. The children were used to seeing their puppy make sudden dives and pounces, but seldom had they seen him dash so wildly as he did this time straight into the arms of a little girl who was sitting in an automobile drawn up by the curbing.

"It is my own dear lost puppy," she cried to the gentleman who was getting into the car. And to the little bundle of fur in her lap she went on: "Where have you been this long, long time?" Then she caught a glimpse of the three children. Billy was trying very hard not to forget he was a boy; Cicely was blinking away the tears in her eyes and, Baby Dumpkins sobbed: "I want Puppy Pounce."

Hearing his name, Puppy Pounce jumped out of the car and began to tug at the Dollivers' jackets at the same time looking at the little girl in the automobile.

"He wants to introduce us," she called, and smiled so pleasantly that the children drew nearer.

"I know it must have been you who have taken care of my puppy."

The Dollivers nodded, but nobody felt much like talking.

The girl continued: "My father and I were traveling and puppy was tied in the baggage car. He slipped out of his collar and got off the train somewhere, but we had no idea where. I thank you, oh, so much for being kind to my dog."

Dumpkins, who had stopped crying, began to wail again.

"Now, don't you think this is a nice plan," suggested the little girl's father. "We're just starting on another long journey tomorrow. You see, my little daughter and I travel a great deal. But the puppy evidently doesn't like to travel and anybody can see that he does like to live with you." Then turning to the little girl, he questioned: "What do you say, Margaret, to asking these young people if they won't look after the pet a while longer?"

"It is a nice plan," Margaret answered, a little regretfully, and she put Puppy Pounce into Dumpkins' arms.

Then the Dollivers, all smiles, together with Puppy Pounce, friskier than ever, were bundled into the car and driven home. And that was how it happened that Puppy Pounce kept on living with the Dolliver. When Margaret and her father, who lived in a near-by town, were at home from their journeys, they came often to see the children and Puppy Pounce, and many a time they were all whisked off in the big car for a day's fun. And so they became the best of friends.

"To think," they would often say, "if it hadn't been for our Puppy Pounce, we never would have known one another."—Rebecca Deming Moore in Woman's World.

"Pa, a man's wife is his better half, isn't she?"

"We are told so, my son."

"Then if a man marries twice there isn't anything left of him, is there?" —Boston Transcript.

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