

Leslie Madeline

Little Frankie at His Plays



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CHAPTER I.

FRANKIE AND HIS WHEELBARROW

I have already told you that Frankie lived in a pretty cottage, separated from the road by a green lawn, which lay in front of it. On the other side of the street, the land was much lower, a little shining brook running through it, and sometimes, after a rain, there was quite a pond of water. In winter this was a pleasant place for Willie to skate. His mamma liked it, because she could watch him from the windows; Willie liked it, because when his hands were cold he could run home to warm himself; and Frankie liked it, because it made him laugh and clap his hands to see his brother bow and turn this way and that, run a few steps, and then make such pretty figures on the ice. He had no doubt at all but Willie did all this just to amuse him. If you could have seen him as he stood in his chair at the front window, how he jumped up and down, and threw his head back, and then held it far forward on his breast, laughing so merrily, bursting out afresh every time Willie made a bow or stretched out his arms, you could not have helped laughing yourself, out of sympathy.

Sally seemed to enjoy it as much as he did.

"I declare," she said one day, as her mistress entered the room and found her sitting by the fire with her work, while Frankie stood at the window, "I haven't laughed so much in a month. It does one's heart good just to see how the little fellow enjoys his brother's sport."

Back of the house where he lived there was a barn. His papa did not keep a horse in it, but one day, after some months, a gentleman came to pass a few days at the cottage, and his horse was put up in the barn. One pleasant evening, when papa, and mamma, and their friends were walking in the garden, the gentleman said he would lead his horse down to the pond, and give him some water to drink, and he invited Willie to ride upon the horse's back. Willie's papa helped him on, and he held fast by the horse's mane. When he came back, Frankie wanted to ride too. Mamma was afraid he would fall; but the gentleman said the horse was gentle, and papa said he would hold him very tightly.

So Frankie mounted the horse, and took his first lesson in riding. Papa was going to walk about the grounds, but the little boy said, "Pony want water gen, papa; pony must have more water."

Frankie had never been to the pond before. First they had to cross the road, then go through the rail fence into the field. The gentleman let down two bars, and the horse carefully stepped over the other. Then papa held his baby very tight, because they were going down a steep place into the water. The gentleman thought pony would not drink again; but he did, and Frankie leaned over, and saw him suck up great mouthfuls of water. Then they turned back, and went out of the field, papa holding the horse, while the gentleman put up the bars again.

Mamma was very glad to get her boy safely home. She had been anxious all the time, for fear he would fall and hurt himself, though papa laughed, and told her there was no danger. She had kept Ponto near her, for fear he would bark and frighten the strange horse. But the moment Frankie was taken off, he flew up to him, and licked his face and hands, and tried to spring on his neck, he was so glad to see him.

I don't know what Frankie would have done without Ponto. Willie and Margie were at school; and there were a great many hours when he would have had to play alone. But Ponto was always ready for a frolic. He was never tired or out of humor, though sometimes he was rather too rough; and then he loved his young master so much, that he wanted to kiss him oftener than Frankie liked.

Early in the summer, papa had bought a wheelbarrow for his boy to roll in the yard. It was painted red, and on the sides were pretty pictures painted in gilt. It had long, smooth handles, and a large wheel, so that it ran along the walks very nicely indeed.

I wish you could have been there to see what pleasant plays Frankie had with his dog and his wheelbarrow; but as you were not, I will try to tell you about it.

Mamma had made a pretty sun bonnet, with a deep frill to shade his face, and as soon as the sun had dried up the dew, she tied it on his head, and let him run all about the grounds with only Ponto to take care of him.

Ponto knew very well that the little fellow was left in his charge; and when mamma said, "Ponto, look here, sir; take care of your little master," he would hold up his head, and wag his tail, and bow, wow, wow, as much as to say, "Yes, indeed, ma'am."

Then Frankie would run along wheeling his barrow, and Ponto close beside him, until they came to the woodpile. Here the little boy stopped, and began to fill his barrow with sticks; and Ponto picked them up in his teeth almost as fast as Frankie did with his hands. Sometimes he was wild and full of fun, so that when Frankie wanted to take the stick from his mouth and put it in the barrow, Ponto would spring up into the air, and run away; but when he heard his master say, "Come here, sir," he would be sober in a moment. O, Ponto was a very knowing dog indeed!

When the barrow was full, Frankie rolled it to the back door, and put it in a basket set there for him by Jane. When she saw him coming, she called out through the window, "Sure and he's not a baby at all, but a man entirely, to be bringing me all my wood. Sure and I'll make him a nice cake for his supper."

Then Frankie felt very large, and walked off with his head up and his lips parted in a pleasant smile.

By and by Frankie would be tired of wheeling wood; then he used to take Jane's small kitchen shovel, and fill his barrow with sand; and what do you think he did with it. I am sure you cannot guess. Why, he poured it all over Ponto. The first time he did this, the dog did not like it at all; but when he heard Frankie laughing so merrily, and saw how much he was pleased, he felt, I suppose, willing to submit. So he lay down again in the walk, and this time Frankie laughed so that he did not half fill the barrow before he poured it over the dog again.

Much as he tried to like it, I suppose Ponto was not very much pleased, for he soon got up and shook himself thoroughly, and then barked a little, as if to say, "No more, if you please."

CHAPTER II. FRANKIE AND HIS DOG

A few days after Frankie's ride on horseback, he was out of doors playing with Ponto, and he thought he would take a walk down to the pond. Before this time, he had been a very good boy, and had never gone through the gate into the road, though sometimes he would stand at the fence, and look through to see people passing by.

Mamma was busy in the parlor with company; and Sally was at work in the back part of the house.

When Ponto saw that his master was going into the street, he began to bark furiously, for he knew this was not exactly right. Mrs. Gray heard him, and ran to the window; but just at this moment Frankie was behind a tree, and she did not see him; so she thought that the dog was barking at something he saw in the road.

For a minute Ponto was very much excited, and ran back toward the house, but presently turned and followed Frankie to the water.

The little boy did not seem at all afraid, but went right down the steep path where he had rode on the horse. I suppose he thought the water looked very pretty, for he walked right into it up to his waist.

A few minutes after Frankie went away from the back door, Sally went out to shake the hearth rug. As she did not see him any where about, she called, "Frankie, Frankie! Ponto, Ponto!" She ran around to the front of the house, still calling, "Frankie, Frankie!" and "Ponto, Ponto!"

Mamma heard her, and ran to the door.

"Have you seen Frankie, ma'am?" asked Sally, pale with fright.

"Where's Ponto?" cried the lady, without stopping to answer.

"There he is," screamed nurse, running as fast as she could toward the water.

Mamma ran too, and the ladies who were in the parlor; but mamma was so frightened that her head swam round and round, and she could hardly stand.

When Ponto heard them coming, he barked louder than ever, but he did not run toward them; and Sally sprang over the fence without waiting to let the bars down, and in one moment more caught the poor frightened Frankie in her arms. Ponto had taken the little fellow in his teeth, and put him on the bank.

He lay quite still, as if he were very tired, only when Sally placed him in his mamma's arms, he put up his little wet hand, and tried to stroke her cheek. His eyes were very red, as if he had been crying, and his clothes all dripping with water and stained with mud. Sally ran forward to get the bath tub filled with warm water, while mamma carried him gently toward the house.

No one seemed to be in such good spirits as Ponto. He danced and jumped, trying to catch Frankie's foot, and whisked his tail up and down, and did every thing he could to express his joy at having his little friend safe again.

How and when the ladies went away mamma did not know. She carried her dear boy up into the nursery, and then sank down, and began to cry. When Sally saw her, she cried too; and Jane, who, was pulling off Frankie's stockings, wiped her eyes with her apron. They were all crying for joy that dear, darling little Frankie had not been drowned. And mamma whispered a few words as she bent over her boy. She knew that God could hear, and so she said, "O my heavenly Father, I do thank thee for restoring my precious child to my arms. Once more I give him to thee."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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