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# The Toy Farm

*Maud Lindsay*

Long before Christmas, the MacMulligan children decided to buy the toy farm for their mother's Christmas present. The twins, Patsy and Timmy, were the ones who thought of it first.

Ever since they could remember, Mrs. MacMulligan had been wishing for a little house with trees beside it, and for ducks and hens and pigs and a cow and a horse; and the toy farm had all these things. The moment they saw it in the Toy Shop window, they wanted to buy it. Even Cassie and Joseph, who were older than the twins, thought it would be a splendid present for their mother. "It will look beautiful on the centre-table in the front room," said Cassie.

The toy farm cost fifty cents, and putting all their money together the MacMulligan children had no more than a quarter. But they all set to work to earn the rest of the money.

There were five of them: Joseph, Cassie, the twins, and little Annie who was only four, but if each one of them could make five cents they would have enough to buy the farm. Five fives are twenty-five; Cassie and Joseph had learned that at school.

The twins were the first to make their money, a bright silver dime, by finding Mickey, Mrs. O'Flanagan's big yellow cat, that had gone astray.

There is no telling how many alleys the twins went through nor how many corners they looked into nor how many times they called, "Mickey, Mickey," and "Kitty, Kitty" before they found him sitting on top of a high wall washing his face with his paw. And when they did find him he would not come down from the wall. No indeed! They began to be afraid that he was not Mickey after all, but when Timmy ran and told Mrs. O'Flanagan and she came to see, down jumped Mr. Mickey as if he had never thought of doing anything else.

Right then Mrs. O'Flanagan took the dime out of her pocket and gave it to the twins.

Joseph was the next one of the children to make money and the way that he made it was this; he was standing on the sidewalk wondering what he could do when a little bundle dropped out of a man's pocket right at his feet:

Joseph picked it up and hurried after the man as fast as he could, which was not

very fast because there were so many other people hurrying along the street that day. If it had not been that the man wore a gray hat Joseph would have lost sight of him in the crowd.

The man went down a street, around a corner, across another street, and up another and Joseph followed him. Once he got so close to him that he thought he would catch up with him in a second; but the crowd pushed in between them, and once Joseph lost sight of the man entirely. You can imagine how he felt then with a bundle that did not belong to him. He was just about to ask a policeman what he must do when he spied the man with the gray hat coming out of a store; and then the chase began again; up the street, across the street and—hurrah! Joseph caught up with the man in front of a big church where he had stopped.



“Here is your bundle,” said Joseph and then the man was surprised. He did not know that he had dropped the bundle.

“It is a Christmas present for my baby,” he said and he opened the package and showed Joseph a little white woolly sheep.

“I’m glad I found it,” said Joseph, and the man was glad, too. He took a dime out of his pocket and gave it to the little boy.

“Perhaps you will buy yourself a present with this,” he said.

It was Joseph’s turn to be surprised then, for he had been so busy trying to get the bundle to the man that he had not thought of being paid; but he was pleased.

On his way home he got the dime changed into nickels.

“One of these is for my part of the present,” he told Cassie and the twins, “and the other one I’ll give to little Annie if she’ll learn to say a Christmas piece. Then she’ll have a nickel for the present, too.”

All the children thought that this was the nicest plan in the world; and Cassie found a Christmas verse for Annie before she went to sleep that night.

“Away in a manger, no crib for a bed  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay—  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.”

Everybody in the house helped little Annie, even Mrs. MacMulligan, though she was not in the secret; and all together they were such good teachers that the little girl soon knew the verse. The first time she said it without forgetting a word, Joseph paid her the nickel.

Cassie made her money just two days before Christmas by taking care of Mrs. Ryan's baby. She was running to see the Christmas Tree in the park when Mrs. Ryan put her head out of the window and called:

"Oh, Cassie, dear, will you stay with the baby now while I go to speak a word to my husband's aunt who has just come from the old country, and I'll give you a nickel for the help that you are?"

"Why, I'm going somewhere myself," thought Cassie, but she did not say that to Mrs. Ryan, for, just as the words were on the tip end of her tongue, she remembered the toy farm.

"I'll stay," she said, and though she hated to be left behind while all the other children ran shouting and laughing to see the tree, she was glad when she went home with the last nickel that was needed for her mother's Christmas present.

All the MacMulligan children went to the Toy Shop to buy the present, and they were as happy as birds till, just before they got there, Cassie said:

"Suppose the farm is sold."

That was too dreadful to think about, but, sure enough, when they looked in the window where the toy farm had been when the twins first saw it, it was gone. A procession of tiny camels filled the window shelf.

You can imagine how the children felt then! But Joseph would not give up hope.

"Perhaps the Toy-Lady had another farm," he said. So they went down the little stair to the shop in a doleful group.

But as soon as the Toy-Lady heard what they wanted she began to smile.

"Here is the very farm that you saw," she said. "I took it out of the window this morning and put it in a box."

She wrapped the box in gay holly-paper and Joseph paid her with the money that all the children had helped to make. Then away they went, Cassie holding the package with great care, and every one of them as merry as a mocking-bird. But the happiest time of all was when they gave the farm to Mrs. MacMulligan and she set it out on the center-table in the front room; the little red house with a green tree on either side and the ducks and chickens and horse and cow.

"Never was there such a fine present," said Mrs. MacMulligan, who was half crying and half laughing, she was so pleased. Nothing would do but that she

must call Mrs. O'Flanagan and Mrs. Ryan and all the other neighbors in to see.

"When I am a man I'm going to buy you a house like that to live in," said Joseph who was getting to be a big boy.

And the neighbors and Mrs. MacMulligan said they wouldn't be surprised if that was just what he did.

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