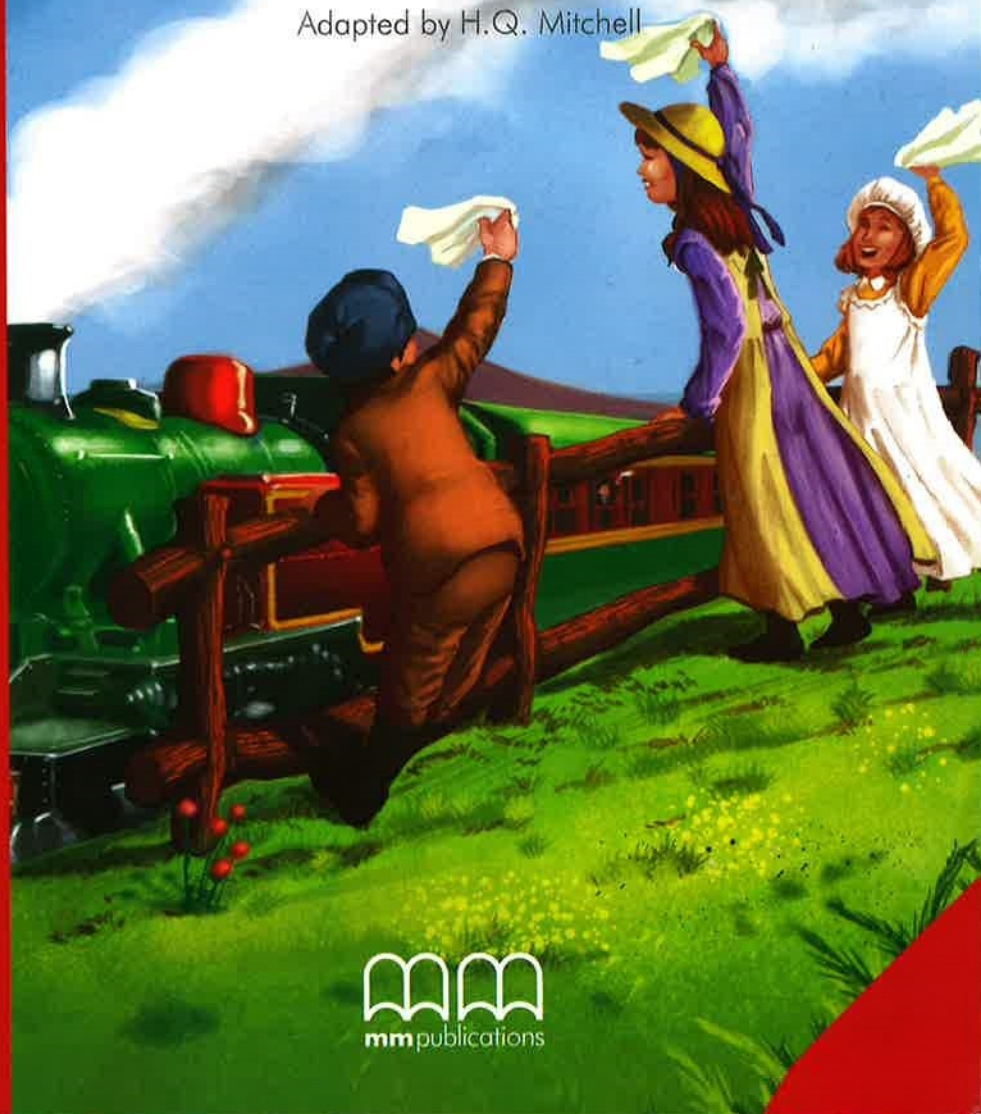


TOP READERS

EDITH NESBIT

The Railway Children

Adapted by H.Q. Mitchell



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CHAPTER 1

THEY WERE NOT RAILWAY CHILDREN AT FIRST. THEY LIVED with their Mother and Father in a beautiful red-brick home in London. Roberta, the oldest, was a very sweet child. Everybody called her Bobbie. Peter, the middle child, wanted to be an engineer when he grew up. The youngest child, Phyllis, was always trying to be good but was always a bit clumsy.

Peter's favourite toy was a train engine. He loved it more than anything else. One day, however, his toy engine broke, and Peter was very sad.

"Don't worry, my dear," Mother told Peter. "Father will fix your toy engine when he comes home tonight."

In the evening, Father arrived and Peter ran straight to him.

"Oh, Father, can you please help me fix my toy engine?" Peter asked right away.

"Hmmm," Father said while looking at the engine, "Of course I can help you. Let us wait until Saturday afternoon, and we will fix the engine together!"

Then, suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Ruth, the housemaid answered the door, and told Father that two gentlemen wanted to speak with him.

Father went to speak to the gentlemen and after awhile, Ruth returned and called Mother into the study. The children were very curious. They heard the gentlemen talking with Father and Mother. Then, they heard the sound of boots walking down the steps and out of the front door.

A little later, Mother came into the room. She was very pale, and her eyes were red.

"It's bedtime children," she said. "Ruth will put you to bed."

"But you promised we could stay up late tonight with Father," said Peter.

"Father had to go away... on business," said Mother. "Come, darlings, go at once."

The three children were wondering what was the matter, but they kissed her and went to sleep. Mother looked very sad and they didn't



want to upset her more.

The next day, Mother was out all day until seven in the evening. When she had her cup of tea, she said, "My darlings, I want to tell you something. Those men last night did bring very bad news, and Father has to be away for some time. I am very worried about it, and I want you all to help me, and not make things harder for me."

The children agreed, because they did not want to see Mother looking so sad. The days passed, and Mother was always out. Ruth had to leave and Aunt Emma came to help out at home. She was very strict and the children did not like her very much, so they didn't spend a lot of time with her.

Then one day, Mother announced to the children that they would be moving to a new house.

"My dears, everything is settled. We are going to leave this house and go live in the country," she told them.

Days of packing followed. When everything was ready, they all took a cab to the railway station, and Aunt Emma waved goodbye to them. The children were quite sad to leave their home in London, but they were also very excited about their new life in the country.





CHAPTER 2

MOTHER, BOBBIE, PHYLLIS, AND PETER ARRIVED AT THE Three Chimneys, the country house, late in the evening. They were all very tired and hungry.

"Well, here we are," said Mother. "Now let us find some candles and see if there is any food."

The children lit candles and looked around. It was a small house, with very simple furniture - nothing like their old home in London.

The children looked in the kitchen and they looked in the dining room, but there was nothing for dinner.

"Oh well," said Mother. "Maybe Mrs Viney forgot about it."

"Who's Mrs Viney?" asked Bobbie.

"She's a woman from the village. She's going to help me with the house," answered Mother.

"What are we going to eat now?" asked Peter. "I'm hungry!"

"Don't worry. There are some things from the old house in that box," said Mother.

There were biscuits and dried fruit, a tin of sardines and marmalade. It was a strange dinner, but they all enjoyed it very much. Then they made their beds and went to sleep.

"Look, children," said Mother in the morning. "There's another room next to the kitchen. And last night's dinner is in there! We can have it for breakfast."

"There's cold meat and bread and butter and cheese," said Bobbie.

"And apple pie!" said Peter. "I love apple pie!"

After breakfast, Mother went to her room to work. The children looked at each other.

"Let's go outside and explore!" shouted Peter.

"That's a good idea!" said Phyllis. "Let's go and see the garden!"

"Oh, never mind about the garden!" cried Peter. "Let's go to the railway!"

Bobbie and Phyllis liked that idea and followed Peter. They walked to the railway and explored the railway lines. They visited the station and the tunnel, and they saw a lot of interesting things. They even saw a real train coming out of the tunnel.

A few more days went by. One very cold morning in June, Mother was in her room, writing.

"Oh, Mother," said Peter. "It is so cold in here! Can we please light a fire?"

"My dear Peter," Mother said. "We cannot light a fire. Coal is very expensive, and we do not have a lot of money now. That is why I am writing. I will try to sell my stories so we can have more money."

Peter said nothing, but he went to his sisters.

"Hey listen! I have an idea - I know where we can find some coal. Come on!" he said.

Bobbie and Phyllis followed Peter to the railway station, and he took them to a big pile of coal. Peter had brought a small wagon with him, and he started filling it with coal. Suddenly, he heard a noise and a hand grabbed him by the jacket.

"Hey you, thief! Stop there!" a voice called out. It was the Station Master.

"I'm not a thief, sir!" Peter yelled. "I'm a coal miner!"

