

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MAD BULL

ONE evening when Harry and Laura came down to dessert, they were surprised to observe the two little plates usually intended for them turned upside down, while Uncle David pretended not to notice anything, though he stole a glance to see what would happen next. On lifting up these mysterious plates, what did they see lying underneath but two letters with large red seals, one directed to "Master Harry Graham," and the other to "Miss Laura Graham."

"A letter for me!!" cried Harry, in a tone of delightful astonishment, while he tore open the seal, and his hand shook with impatience, so that he could hardly unfold the paper. "What can it be about? I like getting a letter very much! Is it from papa? Did the postman bring it?"

"Yes, he did," said Uncle David; "and he left a message that you must pay a hundred pounds for it to-morrow."

"Very likely, indeed," said Laura; "you should pay that for telling me such a fine story. But my letter is worth more than a hundred pounds, for it

is inviting me to spend another delightful week at Holiday House."

"I am asked too! and not Mrs. Crabtree!" cried Harry, looking at his letter, and almost screaming out for joy, whilst he skipped about the room, rubbing his hands together, and ended by twirling Laura round and round, till they both fell prostrate on the floor.

"If that be meant as a specimen of how you intend to behave at Holiday House, we had better send your apology at once," observed Lady Harriet, smiling. "Lord Rockville is very particular about never hearing any noise, and the slamming of a door, or even the creaking of a pair of unruly shoes, would put him distracted."

"Yes!" added Uncle David, "Holiday House is as quiet as Harry's drum with a hole in it. If a pin drops in any part of the mansion, Lord Rockville becomes annoyed, and the very wasps scarcely dare to buzz at his window so loud as at any other person's. You will feel quite fish-out-of-water-ish trying to be quiet and humdrum for a whole week; so let me advise you not to go."

"The meaning of advice always is something that one would rather wish not to do," observed Laura gravely. "I never in my life was advised to enjoy anything pleasant! Taking physic—or learning lessons—or staying at home, are very often advised, but never playing, or having a holiday, or amusing ourselves!"

"Yes," added Major Graham; "I understand

that Lord Rockville wished to have some particularly quiet children there for a short time, so he fixed upon Harry and Laura! Poor, mistaken Lord Rockville! But, my good friends, try not to break all his china ornaments the first day—spare a few jars and teacups—leave a pane or two of glass in the windows, and throw none of your marbles at the mirrors."

Having received so many warnings and injunctions about behaving well, Harry and Laura became so quiet during the first few days at Holiday House that they were like shadows flitting through the rooms, going almost on tiptoe, scarcely speaking above a whisper, and observing that valuable rule for children, to let themselves be seen, but not heard. Lord Rockville was quite charmed with such extreme good conduct, for they were both in especial awe of him, and thought it a great condescension if he even looked at them, he was so tall, so grand, and so grave, wearing a large, powdered wig and silver spectacles, which gave him a particularly venerable appearance, though Harry was one day very nearly getting into disgrace upon that subject. His Lordship had a habit of always carrying two pairs of spectacles in his pocket, and often, after thrusting one pair high upon his forehead, he forgot where they were, and put others on his nose, which had such a droll appearance that the first time Harry saw it, he felt quite taken by surprise and burst into a fit of laughter; upon which Lord Rockville gave him such a comical