

OpenTheo

Five Children and It—Chapter 2: Golden Guineas

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Alastair Roberts

For the Easter season, I am posting some rather different things on this channel, in addition to my regular output, as a little gift to my followers and supporters. This is the third book I am reading through: 'Five Children and It', by E Nesbit. I hope that you all enjoy!

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Transcript

Chapter 2. Golden Guineas. Anthe awoke in the morning from a very real sort of dream, in which she was walking in the zoological gardens on a pouring wet day without an umbrella. The animals seemed desperately unhappy because of the rain, and were all growling gloomily.

When she awoke, both the growling and the rain went on just the same. The growling was the heavy, regular breathing of her sister Jane, who had a slight cold and was still asleep. The rain fell in slow drops onto Anthea's face from the wet corner of a bath towel, out of which her brother Robert was gently squeezing the water, to wake her up, as he now explained.

Oh, drop it! she said rather crossly. So he did, for he was not a brutal brother, though very ingenious in apple pie beds, booby traps, original methods of awakening sleeping relatives, and the other little accomplishments which make home happy. I had such a funny dream, Anthea began.

So did I, said Jane, waking suddenly and without warning. I dreamed we found a sand-

ferry in the gravel pits, and it said it was a Samoyed, and we might have a new wish every day, and... But that's what I dreamed, said Robert. I was just going to tell you, and we had the first wish directly, it said so.

And I dreamed you girls were donkey enough to ask for us all to be beautiful as day, and we jolly well were, and it was perfectly beastly. But can different people all dream the same thing, said Anthea, sitting up in bed, because I dreamed all that as well as about the zoo and the rain, and baby didn't know us in my dream, and the servants shut us out of the house because the radiantness of our beauty was such a complete disguise, and... The voice of the eldest brother sounded from across the landing. Come on, Robert, it said, you'll be late for breakfast again, unless you mean to shirk your bath as you did on Tuesday.

I say, come here a second, Robert replied. I didn't shirk it. I had it after brekka in father's dressing-room, because ours was emptied away.

Cyril appeared in the doorway, partially clothed. Look here, said Anthea. We've all had such an odd dream.

We've all dreamed we found a sand-ferry. Her voice died away before Cyril's contemptuous glance. Dream? he said.

You little sillies, it's true. I tell you, it all happened. That's why I'm so keen on being down early.

We'll go up there directly after brekka and have another wish. Only we'll make up our minds solid before we go. What is it we do want? And no one must ask for anything unless the others agree first.

No more peerless beauties for this child, thank you. Not if I know it. The other three dressed, with their mouths open.

If all that dream about the sand-ferry was real, this real dressing seemed very like a dream, the girls thought. Jane felt that Cyril was right, but Anthea was not sure, till after they had seen Martha and heard her full and plain reminders about their naughty conduct the day before. Then Anthea was sure.

Because, said she, servants never dream anything but the things in the dream-book, like snakes and oysters and going to a wedding. That means a funeral. And snakes are a false female friend, and oysters are babies.

Talking of babies, said Cyril, where's the lamb? Martha's going to take him to Rochester to see her cousins. Mother said she might. She's dressing him now, said Jane, in his very best coat and hat.

Bread and butter, please. She seems to like taking him too, said Robert in a tone of wonder. Servants do like taking babies to see their relations, Cyril said.

I've noticed it before, especially in their best clothes. I expect they pretend they're their own babies, and that they're not servants at all, but married to noble dukes of high degree, and they say the babies are little dukes and duchesses, Jane suggested dreamily, taking more marmalade. I expect that's what Martha'll say to her cousin.

She'll enjoy herself most frightfully. She won't enjoy herself most frightfully carrying our infant duke to Rochester, said Robert. Not if she's anything like me she won't.

Fancy walking to Rochester with the lamb on your back, said Cyril in full agreement. She's gone by the carrier's cart, said Jane. Let's see them off.

Then we shall have done a plight and kindly act, and we shall be quite sure we've got rid of them for the day. So they did. Martha wore her Sunday dress of two shades of purple, so tight in the chest that it made her stoop, and her blue hat with the pink cornflowers and white ribbon.

She had a yellow lace collar with a green bow, and the lamb had indeed his very best cream-coloured silk coat and hat. It was a smart party that the carrier's cart picked up at the crossroads, when its white tilt and red wheels had slowly vanished in a swirl of chalk dust. And now for the Samoyed, said Cyril.

And off they went. As they went they decided on the wish they would ask for. Although they were all in a great hurry, they did not try to climb down the sides of the gravel pit, but went round by the safe lower road, as if they had been carts.

They had made a ring of stones round the place where the sand-ferry had disappeared, so they easily found the spot. The sun was burning and bright, and the sky was a deep blue, without a cloud. The sand was very hot to touch.

Oh, suppose it was only a dream after all, Robert said, as the boys uncovered their spades from the sand-heap where they had buried them and began to dig. Suppose you were a sensible chap, said Cyril, one's quite as likely as the other. Suppose you kept a civil tongue in your head, Robert snapped.

Suppose we girls take a turn, said Jane, laughing. You boys seem to be getting very warm. Suppose you don't come putting your silly oar in, said Robert, who was now warm indeed.

We won't, said Anthea quickly. Robert, dear, don't be so grumpy. We won't say a word.

You shall be the one to speak to the ferry and tell him what we've decided to wish for. You'll say it much better than we shall. Suppose you drop being a little humbug, said

Robert, but not crossly.

Look out! Dig with your hands now! So they did, and presently uncovered the spider-shaped, brown, hairy body, long arms and legs, bats' ears and snails' eyes of the sand-ferry himself. Everyone drew a deep breath of satisfaction, for now of course it couldn't have been a dream. The Samoyad sat up and shook the sand out of its fur.

How's your left whisker this morning? said Anthea politely. Nothing to boast of, said it. It had a rather restless night, but thank you for asking.

I say, said Robert, do you feel up to giving wishes today? Because we very much want an extra beside the regular one. The extra's a very little one, he added reassuringly. Humpf, said the sand-ferry.

Humpf! Do you know, until I heard you being disagreeable to each other just over my head, and so loud too, I really quite thought I had dreamed you all. I do have very odd dreams sometimes. Do you? Jane hurried to say, so as to get away from the subject of disagreeableness.

I wish, she added politely, you'd tell us about your dreams. They must be awfully interesting. Is that the day's wish? said the sand-ferry, yawning.

Cyril muttered something about just like a girl, and the rest stood silent. If they said yes, then goodbye to the other wishes they had decided to ask for. If they said no, it would be very rude, and they had all been taught manners, and had learned a little too, which is not at all the same thing.

A sigh of relief broke from all lips when the sand-ferry said, If I do, I shan't have strength to give you a second wish, not even good tempers, or common sense or manners, or little things like that. We don't want you to put yourself out at all about these things. We can manage them quite well ourselves, said Cyril eagerly, while the others looked guiltily at each other, and wished the ferry would not keep all on about good tempers, but give them one good scolding if it wanted to, and then have done with it.

Well, said the samoyed, putting out his long snail's eyes so suddenly, that one of them nearly went into the round boy's eye of Robert. Let's have the little wish first. We don't want the servants to notice the gifts you give us.

Our kind to give us, said Anthea in a whisper. Our kind to give us, I mean, said Robert. The ferry swelled himself out a bit, let his breath go, and said, I've done that for you.

It was quite easy. People don't notice things much anyway. What's the next wish? We want, said Robert slowly, to be rich beyond the dreams of something or other.

Avarice, said Jane. So it is, said the ferry unexpectedly. But it won't do you much good.

That's one comfort, it muttered to itself. Come, I can't go beyond dreams, you know. How much do you want? And will you have it in gold or notes? Gold, please, and millions of it.

This gravel pit full be enough, said the ferry in an offhand manner. Oh yes? Then go out before I begin or you'll be buried alive in it. It made its skinny arms so long and waved them so frighteningly that the children ran as hard as they could towards the road by which carts used to come to the gravel pits.

Only Anthea had presence of mind enough to shout a timid, Good morning! I hope your whisker will be better tomorrow, as she ran. On the road they turned and looked back, and they had to shut their eyes and open them very slowly a little bit at a time, because the sight was too dazzling for their eyes to be able to bear. It was something like trying to look at the sun at high noon on midsummer day, for the whole of the sand pit was full, right up to the very top, with new shining gold pieces, and all the little bank martin's little front doors were covered out of sight.

Where the road for carts wound into the gravel pit, the gold lay in heaps like stones lie by the roadside, and a great bank of shining gold shelved down from where it lay flat and smooth between the tall sides of the gravel pit, and all the gleaming heaps was minted gold. And on the sides and edges of these countless coins the midday sun shone and sparkled, and glowed and gleamed, till the quarry looked like the mouth of a smelting furnace, or one of the fairy halls that you see sometimes in the sky at sunset. The children stood with their mouths open, and no one said a word.

At last Robert stooped and picked up one of the loose coins from the edge of the heap by the cart road, and looked at it. He looked on both sides. Then he said in a low voice, quite different to his own, It's not sovereigns.

It's gold anyway, said Cyril. And now they all began to talk at once. They all picked up the golden treasure by handfuls, and let it run through their fingers like water, and the chink it made as it fell was wonderful music.

At first they quite forgot to think of spending the money. It was so nice to play with. Jane sat down between two heaps of the gold, and Robert began to bury her, as you bury your father in sand when you are at the seaside, and he has gone to sleep on the beach with his newspaper over his face.

But Jane was not half buried before she cried out, Oh stop, it's too heavy, it hurts. Robert said, Bosh! and went on. Let me out, I tell you, cried Jane, and was taken out, very white and trembling a little.

You've no idea what it's like, said she. It's like stones on you, or like chains. Look here, Cyril said, if this is to do us any good, it's no good us staying gasping at it like this.

Let's fill our pockets and go and buy things. Don't you forget it won't last after sunset. I wish we'd asked the Samoyed why things don't turn to stone.

Perhaps this will. I'll tell you what, there's a pony and cart in the village. Do you want to buy that? asked Jane.

No, silly, we'll hire it, and then we'll go to Rochester and buy heaps and heaps of things. Look here, let's each take as much as we can carry, but it's not sovereigns. They've got a man's head on one side and a thing like the ace of spades on the other.

Fill your pockets with it, I tell you, and come along. You can talk as we go, if you must talk. Cyril sat down and began to fill his pockets.

You made fun of me for getting father to have nine pockets in my suit, said he, but now you see. They did, for when Cyril had filled his nine pockets and his handkerchief in the space between himself and his shirt front with the gold coins, he had to stand up. But he staggered and had to sit down again in a hurry.

Throw out some of the cargo, said Robert. You'll sink the ship, old chap. That comes of nine pockets.

And Cyril had to do so. Then they set off to walk to the village. It was more than a mile, and the road was very dusty indeed, and the sun seemed to get hotter and hotter, and the gold in their pockets got heavier and heavier.

It was Jane who said, I don't see how we're to spend it all. There must be thousands of pounds among the lot of us. I'm going to leave some of mine behind this stump in the hedge, and directly we get to the village, we'll buy some biscuits.

I know it's long past dinner time. She took out a handful or two of gold and hid it in the hollows of an old hornbeam. How round and yellow they are, she said.

Don't you wish they were made of gingerbread and we were going to eat them? Well, they're not, and we're not, said Cyril. Come on. But they came on heavily and wearily.

Before they reached the village, more than one stump in the hedge concealed its little hoard of hidden treasure. Yet they reached the village with about twelve hundred guineas in their pockets. But in spite of this inside wealth, they looked quite ordinary outside, and no one would have thought they could have more than a half crown each at the outside.

The haze of heat, the blue of the wood smoke, made a sort of dim misty cloud over the red roofs of the village. The four sat down heavily on the first bench to which they came. It happened to be outside the Blue Boar Inn.

It was decided that Cyril should go into the Blue Boar and ask for ginger beer, because,

as Anthea said, it was not wrong for men to go into beer saloons only for children, and Cyril is nearer being a man than us because he is the eldest. So he went. The others sat in the sun and waited.

Oh, how hot it is, said Robert. Dogs put their tongues out when they're hot. I wonder if it would cool us at all to put out ours.

We might try, Jane said, and they all put their tongues out as far as ever they could go so that it quite stretched their throats. But it only seemed to make them thirstier than ever, besides annoying everyone who went by. So they took their tongues in again, just as Cyril came back with ginger beer.

I had to pay for it out of my own money, though, that I was going to buy rabbits with, he said. They wouldn't change the gold. And when I pulled out a handful the man just laughed and said it was card counters.

And I got some sponge cakes, too, out of a glass jar on the bar counter and some biscuits with caraways in. The sponge cakes were both soft and dry, and the biscuits were dry, too, and yet soft, which biscuits ought not to be, but the ginger beer made up for everything. It's my turn now to try to buy something with the money, Anthea said.

I'm next eldest. Where is the pony cart kept? It was at the chequers, and Anthea went in the back way to the yard, because they all knew that little girls ought not to go into the bars of beer saloons. She came out, as she herself said, pleased but not proud.

He'll be ready in a brace of shakes, he says, she remarked, and he's to have one sovereign, or whatever it is, to drive us into Rochester and back, besides waiting there till we've got everything we want. I think I manage very well. You think yourself jolly clever, I dare say, says Cyril moodily.

How did you do it? I wasn't jolly clever enough to go taking handfuls of money out of my pocket to make it seem cheap anyway, she retorted. I just found a young man doing something to a horse's legs with a sponge and a pail, and I held out one sovereign and I said, Do you know what this is? He said, No, and he would call his father, and the old man came and he said it was a spade guinea, and he said, Was it my own to do as I liked with? And I said, Yes, and I asked about the pony cart, and I said he could have the guinea if he would drive us into Rochester, and his name is S. Crispin, and he said, Righto. It was a new sensation to be driven in a smart pony trap along pretty country roads.

It was very pleasant, too, which is not always the case with new sensations. Quite apart from the beautiful plans of spending the money which each child made as they went along, silently of course and quite to itself, for they felt it would never have done to let the old innkeeper hear them talk in the affluent sort of way in which they were thinking,

the old man put them down by the bridge at their request. If you were going to buy a carriage and horses, where would you go? asked Cyril, as if he were only asking for the sake of something to say.

Billy Peasmarsh, at the Saracens Head, said the old man promptly, though all forbid I should recommend any man where it's a question of horses, no more than I'd take anybody else's recommending if I was a buying one, but if you're past thinking of a rig of any sort, there ain't a straighter man in Rochester, nor civiler spoken than Billy, though I says it. Thank you, said Cyril, the Saracens Head. And now the children began to see one of the laws of nature turn upside down and stand on its head like an acrobat.

Any grown up person would tell you that money is hard to get and easy to spend, but the fairy money had been easy to get, and spending it was not only hard, it was almost impossible. The tradespeople of Rochester seemed to shrink to a tradesperson from the glittering fairy gold. Foreign money, they called it, for the most part.

To begin with, Anthea, who had had the misfortune to sit on her hat earlier in the day, wished to buy another. She chose a very beautiful one, trimmed with pink roses and the blue breasts of peacocks. It was marked in the window, Paris model, three guineas.

I'm glad, she said, because it says guineas and not sovereigns, which we haven't got. But when she took three of the spade guineas in her hand, which was by this time rather dirty owing to her not having put on gloves before going to the gravel pit, the black silk young lady in the shop looked very hard at her and went and whispered something to an older and uglier lady, also in black silk, and then they gave her back the money and said it was not current coin. It's good money, said Anthea, and it's my own.

I dare say, said the lady, but it's not the kind of money that's fashionable now, and we don't care about taking it. I believe they think we've stolen it, said Anthea, rejoining the others in the street. If we had gloves they wouldn't think we were so dishonest.

It's my hands being so dirty fills their minds with doubts. So they chose a humble shop, and the girls bought cotton gloves, the kind at a shilling. But when they offered a guinea the woman looked at it through her spectacles and said she had no change, so the gloves had to be paid for out of Cyril's money, with which he meant to buy rabbits, and so had the green imitation crocodile skin purse at ninepence, which had been bought at the same time.

They tried several more shops, the kinds where you buy toys and perfume and silk handkerchiefs and books, and fancy boxes of stationery, and photographs of objects of interest in the vicinity. But nobody cared to change a guinea that day in Rochester, and as they went from shop to shop they got dirtier and dirtier, and their hair got more and more untidy, and Jane slipped and fell down on a part of the road where a water cart had just gone by. Also they got very hungry, but they found no one would give them anything

to eat for their guineas.

After trying two baker shops in vain, they became so hungry, perhaps from the smell of the cake in the shops, as Cyril suggested, that they formed a plan of campaign in whispers and carried it out in desperation. They marched into a third baker shop, Beale was his name, and before the people behind the count could interfere, each child had seized three new penny buns, clapped the three together between its dirty hands, and taken a big bite out of the triple sandwich. Then they stood at bay, with the twelve buns in their hands and their mouths very full indeed.

The shocked baker's man bounded round the corner. Here, said Cyril, speaking as distinctly as he could, and holding out the guinea he got ready before entering the shops, Pay yourself out of that! Mr. Beale snatched the coin, bit it and put it in his pocket. Off you go, he said, brief and stern like the man in the song.

But the change, said Anthea, who had a saving mind. Change? said the man. I'll change you.

Out you goes, and you may think yourselves lucky I don't send for the police to find out where you got it. In the gardens of the castle the millionaires finished the buns, and though the currenty softness of these were delicious and acted like a charm in raising the spirits of the party, yet even the stoutest heart quailed at the thought of venturing to sound Mr. Billy Piesmarsh at the Saracen's head on the subject of a horse and carriage. The boys would have given up the idea, but Jane was always a hopeful child, and Anthea generally an obstinate one, and their earnestness prevailed.

The whole party, by this time indescribably dirty, therefore betook itself to the Saracen's head. The yard method of attack, having been successful at the checkers, was tried again here. Mr. Piesmarsh was in the yard, and Robert opened the business in these terms.

They tell me you have a lot of horses and carriages to sell. It had been agreed that Robert should be spokesman, because in books it is always gentlemen who buy horses and not ladies, and Cyril had had his go at the blue ball. They tell you true, young man, said Mr. Piesmarsh.

He was a long, lean man, with very blue eyes, and a tight mouth and narrow lips. We would like to buy some, please, said Robert politely. I dare say you would.

Will you show us a few, please, to choose from? Who are you a kidding of? inquired Mr. Billy Piesmarsh. Was you sent here of a message? I tell you, said Robert, we want to buy some horses and carriages, and a man told us you were straight and civil-spoken, but I shouldn't wonder if he was mistaken. Upon my sacred, said Mr. Piesmarsh, shall I trot the whole stable out for your honour's worship to see, or shall I send round to the bishops to

see if he's an ag or two to dispose of? Please do, said Robert, if it's not too much trouble, it would be very kind of you.

Mr. Piesmarsh put his hands in his pockets and laughed, and they did not like the way he did it. Then he shouted, Wollum! A stooping ostler appeared in the stable door. Here, Wollum, come and look at this here young duke, wants to buy the whole stud, lock, stock and barrel, and ain't got tuppence in his pocket to bless his self with, I'll go bail.

Wollum's eyes followed his master's pointing thumb with contemptuous interest. Do he for sure, he said. But Robert spoke, though both the girls were now pulling at his jacket and begging him to come along.

He spoke, and he was very angry. He said, I'm not a young duke, and I never pretended to be, and as for tuppence, what do you call this? And before the others could stop him, he had pulled out two fat handfuls of shining guineas and held them out for Mr. Piesmarsh to look at. He did look.

He snatched one up in his finger and thumb. He bit it, and Jane expected him to say, The best horse in my stables is at your service. But the others knew better.

Still, it was a blow even to the most desponding when he said shortly, Wollum, shut the yard doors, and Wollum grinned and went to shut them. Good afternoon, said Robert hastily. We shan't buy any horses now, whatever you say, and I hope it'll be a lesson to you.

He had seen a little side gate open and was moving towards it as he spoke, but Billy Piesmarsh put himself in the way. Not so fast, you young off-scouring, he said. Wollum, fetch the pleas.

Wollum went. The children stood huddled together like frightened sheep, and Mr. Piesmarsh spoke to them till the police arrived. He said many things.

Among other things he said, Nice like you are, aren't you, coming tempting honest men with your guineas. They are our guineas, said Cyril boldly. Oh, of course we don't know all about that, no more we don't.

Oh no, course not. And dragging little girls into it too. Ere, I'll let the girls go if you'll come along to the pleas quiet.

We won't be let go, said Jane heroically. Not without the boys, it's our money just as much as theirs. You wicked old man.

Where do you get it then, said the man softening slightly, which was not at all what the boys expected when Jane began to call names. Jane cast a silent glance of agony at the others. Lost your tongue, eh? Got it fast enough when it's for calling names with.

Come, speak up. Where do you get it? Out of the gravel pit, said truthful Jane. Next article, said the man.

I tell you we did, Jane said. There's a fairy there all over brown fur with ears like a bat's and eyes like a snail's. And he gives you a wish a day and they all come true.

Touched in the head, eh? said the man in a low voice. All the more shame to you boys dragging the poor afflicted child into your sinful burglaries. She's not mad, it's true, said Anthea.

There is a fairy. If I ever see him again I'll wish for something for you. At least I would if vengeance wasn't wicked.

So there. Lore lummy, said Billy Peasmarsh. If there ain't another on him.

And now Willem came back with a spiteful grin on his face and at his back a policeman with whom Mr Peasmarsh spoke long in a hoarse earnest whisper. I dare say you're right, said the policeman at last. Anyway, I'll take him up on a charge of unlawful possession, pending inquiries, and the magistrate will deal with the case.

Send the afflicted ones to a home, as likely as not, and the boys to a reformatory. Now then, come along youngsters, no use making a fuss. You bring the girls along, Mr Peasmarsh, sir, and I'll shepherd the boys.

Speechless with rage and horror, the four children were driven along the streets of Rochester. Tears of anger and shame blinded them, so that when Robert ran straight into a passer-by, he did not recognise her till a well-known voice said, Well, if I ever did! O Master Robert, whatever have you been a-doing of now? And another voice, quite as well-known, said, Panty! Want go own panty! They had run into Martha and the baby. Martha behaved admirably.

She refused to believe a word of the policeman's story, or of Mr Peasmarsh's either, even when they made Robert turn out his pockets in an archway and show the guineas. I don't see nothing, she said. You've got out of your senses, you two.

There ain't any gold there, only the poor child's hands, all over dirt, and like the very chimney. Oh, that I should ever see the day! And the children thought this very noble of Martha, even if rather wicked, till they remembered how the fairy had promised that the servant should never notice any of the fairy gifts. So of course Martha couldn't see the gold, and so was only speaking the truth, and that was quite right, of course, but not extra noble.

It was getting dusk when they reached the police station. The policeman told his tale to an inspector, who sat in a large bare room with a thing like a clumsy nursery fender at one end to put prisoners in. Robert wondered whether it was a cell or a dock.

Produce the coins, officer, said the inspector. Turn out your pockets, said the constable. Cyril desperately plunged his hands in his pockets, stood still a moment, and then began to laugh, an odd sort of laugh that hurt, and that felt much more like crying.

His pockets were empty, so were the pockets of the others, for of course at sunset all the fairy gold had vanished away. Turn out your pockets and stop that noise, said the inspector. Cyril turned out his pockets, every one of the nine which enriched his suit, and every pocket was empty.

Well, said the inspector, I don't know how they done it, artful little beggars. They walked in front of me the old way, so as for me to keep my eye on them and not to attract a crowd and obstruct the traffic. It's very remarkable, said the inspector, frowning.

If you've done a brow-beating of the innocent children, said Martha, I'll hire a private carriage and we'll drive home to their papa's mansion. You'll hear about this again, young man. I told you they hadn't got any gold when you were pretending to see it in their poor helpless hands.

It's early in the day for a constable on duty not to be able to trust his own eyes. As to the other one, the less said the better. He keeps the Saracens head and he knows best what his liquor's like.

Take them away for goodness sake, said the inspector crossly. But as they left the police station he said, Now then, to the policeman and Mr Peasmarsh, and he said it twenty times as crossly as he had spoken to Martha. Martha was as good as her word.

She took them home in a very grand carriage, because the carrier's cart was gone, and though she had stood by them so nobly with the police, she was so angry with them as soon as they were alone for traipsing into Rochester by themselves, that none of them dared to mention the old man with the pony cart from the village who was waiting for them in Rochester, and so after one day of boundless wealth, the children found themselves sent to bed in deep disgrace, and only enriched by two pairs of cotton gloves, dirty inside because of the state of the hands they had been put on to cover, an imitation crocodile skin purse, and twelve penny buns, long since digested. The thing that troubled them most was the fear that the old gentleman's guinea might have disappeared at sunset with all the rest, so they went down to the village next day to apologise for not meeting him in Rochester, and to see. They found him very friendly.

The guinea had not disappeared, and he had bored a hole in it and hung it on his watch chain. As for the guinea the baker took, the children felt they could not care whether it had vanished or not, which was not perhaps very honest, but on the other hand was not wholly unnatural. But afterwards this preyed on Anthea's mind, and at last she secretly sent twelve postage stamps by post to Mr. Beale Baker Rochester.

Inside she wrote, To pay for the buns. I hope the guinea did disappear, for that baker was really not at all a nice man. And besides, penny buns are seven for six pence in all really respectable shops.