

The Rookwood Review

"It's only to get my blessed hair cut," he said.

The distance between them widened again. Billy thrust his hand in his pocket and fished out his handkerchief, in the corner of which was safely tied a coin of similar denomination.

"I've got to go, too," he said. "That Miss Metcalfe's got too much cheek. What's it matter to her about our hair? Aunt 'ud have given me a nickel this morning, I know, only she had to give me this old dime."

"Its chucking money away," groaned Jimmie, and stopped and looked in a cake shop, all his heart in his eyes.

Billy was thinner than Jimmie, sharper faced, keener eyed. The aunt with whom he lived had so many children of her own she had never found time to undertake more for Billy than the care of his clothes and appetite, and there was not a cent's worth of principle in all his quicksilver nature. His company was the purest delight and fascination to Jimmie, who had a sister as well as a mother anxious to lead him into the paths of well-doing.

"Jimmie," said Billy suddenly, intensity in his voice and in the eyes that were fastened on a strip of cake composed of layers of three colors and displaying preserve and custard sandwich-wise—"Jimmie."

"What?" said Jim. He was licking his dime again and imagining it was a lump of taffy with almonds in.

"Let's lose our money. You drop yours and I'll drop mine, and then you pick up mine and I'll

pick up yours. Nobody can expect us to spend money we find on getting our hair cut."

Jimmie's jaw fell. Good old Allie!—it was no use vexing her by telling her untruths; her eyes could always find one out. "Oh, what's the use?" he said uncomfortably.

"Or how'd it be," continued Billy, "if I grab yours away from you and you grab mine? Then we can just stuff 'em at home that a boy in the street took them from us and ran away."

Jimmie shuffled his strong little boots about uneasily, and Billy perceived the conscience struggle.

"'Twouldn't be a cram," he said eagerly. "We're both boys in the street, ain't we? And just think of having two dimes to ourselves."

Allie always came in and tucked Jimmie's bedclothes in for him last thing. At such times, clean from a thorough soaping, and with the little white room about him, and with the little white room about him, and Allie in her pink evening dress sitting on his bed edge, Jimmie's better angel was always in the ascendancy, and he used to confess to her things he had done, with a recklessness and sorrow that sometimes surprised even himself.

The fringe of the counterpane that he used to pull shamefacedly during such confession seemed to come between him and Billy now.

He grew very red. "All this blessed lot of hair makes me hot," he said. "I want to get it cut."

Billy looked at him searchingly. "They'll give you another dime