

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

MADGE BARRY.

Madge Barry; the name sounded like her, rapid and mischievous, and as I write it I see again the old dance country schoolroom, the dingy desks, the torn speckles, the crowd of restless, healthy, noisy children, and foremost, conspicuous among them all, Madge Barry.

She was taller than most of the other pupils, a strong, bright, dark-eyed girl of fourteen, perhaps, whose shining black hair tossed itself in short round curls all over her well-poised head. She was straight and active; quick to learn, quick to plan, quick to quarrel or forgive, quick in every way.

I can see her now, seriously intent over Mary Baner's slate, working out her problems with a flying pencil, and setting down the correct answer with a triumphant flourish, and a moment later carefully tying Annie Wally's curls to the back of her seat with pieces of twine, while the questions in geography are slowly travelling down the class to find the unconscious Annie a prisoner in her place.

Indeed, Madge's energies seemed equally divided between good and evil doing; not that her mischief took any really wicked form, while her generosity was broad as sunlight and as warm.

All the little helpless sixth-form children looked to Madge as to a strong power of retributive justice. Anything forlorn or wretched, kitten, beggar, tramp, frog or angleworm, found a ready champion and helper in this loud, wilful, merry girl.

She had a way of dividing up her nuts and candies right and left, that made me somehow think of the "loaves and fishes," and her "bounty was spread abroad so widely as not to cause even her foes to be idle in her praise."

Child as she was, I yet was conscious of a great power in Madge to command and control, but she was terribly indolent at times, and could do nothing with better grace than any human being I ever saw.

Madge was a first division girl, and I a third, so I could only observe her from afar, but I remember my feeling of mingled pain and wonder when I saw her stand up, tall, handsome, clever, "the observed of all observers," and fall, utterly, day after day.

I recall, so well, the look of weary, hopeless contempt on Miss Gaynor's face when Madge rose for recitation, and the blush that stole burning to my cheek as she sat down again, smiling and indifferent under scathing rebuke or still more scathing silence.

Poor Miss Gaynor! how plainly she, too, comes before me, flushed, and fretful and pretty, with a steady brilliant light in her hazel eyes, a lustre whose sad meaning I had not learned to know. She was precise, methodical, thoroughly practical in character, but tight-laced, pastry lunches and bad air had made her irritable, whimsical, full of cranks and corners.

To the good girls, the galaxy of shining lights in the front row, Miss Gaynor was, no doubt, an excellent teacher, for they needed neither discipline nor severity; but beyond these, her reign was a tumult, a sort of civil war led on by Madge.

It is very probable this state of affairs would have brought about the speedy expulsion of the chief "turbulent spirit," only for the fact that Madge's parents were among the most esteemed and respected people in Dane, and were, moreover, constantly showering kindnesses and friendly attentions on Miss Gaynor, as if anxious to counterbalance the shortcomings of their rebellious daughter, whom they adored and spoiled and found fault with, after a foolish fashion known only to fathers and mothers that possess but one child. It never occurred to either of them, honest, kindly souls, that the pranks and follies they see so much deplored were simply the legitimate outgrowth of their own lack of will or knowledge to direct the strong unfolding energies of Madge's character.

I used to wonder in my dreamy, childish brain, if anything could ever happen to Madge, to blot away the darling happy smile from her face, or soften her ringing voice, or cloud her open, joyous eyes in tears. And one day, very suddenly and unexpectedly, my question was answered.

How it all comes back to me on a thought! The royal June day, bright and burning, that hung above the broad fresh meadows of Dane!

The schoolroom windows are wide open, and all the soft beauties of the quiet outside world seem crowding near and peeping in to tempt and beckon us. The warm wind stirs lazily, breathing a sort of general listless invitation, which the honeysuckle on the porch seconds by waving its slim green fingers, as if pointing us an easy way to freedom and delight. Little white clouds go sailing down the sky, and lose themselves beyond the hills; the river dreams and sparkles, birds cross in the sunlight from tree to tree, singing and calling to each other no doubt, but we cannot hear one note of their exquisite music, for the dull, heavy noise that prevails within.

It is not the staidness of recitation, but rather a confusion and discord as of "chaos come again." Girls are yawning, girls are humming, girls are talking, girls are laughing. Dolly Spencer is writing notes; Ida Joyce and May Miller are blowing paper pellets; down in the corner by the rusty stove Annie Grant is telling, in hoarse whispers, the story of "Willful Alice," to a select audience of three wide mouths and six very wide eyes.

Mary Baner is cutting paper dolls, well-shielded from view by Mate Joyce's open atlas.

And Madge Barry, as usual the center of a group, is making an elaborate caricature of Miss Gaynor receiving the visiting committee.

There is much crowding, and craning of necks, and various stifled shrieks of laughter, as the work progresses, but the artist sits unmoved by homage, and undisturbed by elbows, putting in, with an impartial hand, the gigantic nose and emphatic shirt collars that are supposed to distinguish visiting committees in general.

As usual, also I am near to Madge, at least within reach of her nod and smile, and the kind protecting looks she loves to send me from time to time, perhaps because she knows I watch and wait for it.

The prim, busy girls on the front seat are working out exercises, slates in hand. Dot, dot, dot, click, click, go the hurrying pencils. Miss Gaynor's monotonous voice reads from the arithmetic and explains; I can scarcely hear her above the tumult, but I can see her very plainly indeed, sitting behind her desk and leaning forward a little on her elbow.

She is dressed in a light blue cambric, with fresh linen at her wrists and neck; her smooth brown hair is built in glossy braids behind, and long coral eardrops dangle from her ears; her cheeks and lips are brighter than ever, but her voice sounds spent and faint; she seems to speak and act mechanically, as if her mind were far away.

I have just finished writing thirty punishment lines for spilling my ink, and am, therefore, at leisure for a time.

It is only 2 o'clock. How slowly the hours move! How drowsy they make me, the heat and noise and bustle! If I could only lay my head down on the desk—! A moment, just a moment!

I suppose I am falling gently asleep, when my senses come back with a jump. A strange sudden sound, a cry, a gasp, rings out above the drooping hum, and stills it instantly. And we all see Miss Gaynor leaning back in her chair as pale as death, holding against her lips a handkerchief stained with blood.

For a moment or two we sit staring at her as if paralyzed. Then little Lucy Morris, the angel of the school (she was indeed an angel, and has gone to heaven since), stands at her side holding a glass of water to her lips.

Some of the others now rise hurriedly, but Miss Gaynor holds up her stilted hand, and they sit down, obeying the mute gesture, as if it forced them into their places.

How quiet the room has grown! The clock ticks out sharply, and the wind comes in with a sort of shuddering sigh.

After a while of waiting, breathless silence, Miss Gaynor arises, supporting herself with her hand on Lucy's shoulder. She is still terribly pale, but she looks round on us with a wistful smile.

"Girls, I must leave you; I am very ill." Her voice is scarcely louder than a whisper, but it sounds in our ears almost like a trumpet. "Lucy will walk home with me. If I am able, I will surely be here in the morning as usual, but if not I should like to appoint one of you to take my place for a day or two, so that the studies can go on. I wish to do this especially on account of the students who are trying for the high school membership, and who cannot afford to lose any time."

She was silent a moment, glancing through the classes. At length— "If she is willing," speaking firmly and clearly, "I appoint Madge Barry. Will you come here to me, Madge?"

"Madge," Miss Gaynor says, gently, and still faintly smiling, "you are my tallest girl, and have the greatest influence. Do you think you could be, for a day or two, my best and wisest girl? Will you try to take my place while I am gone? I have sometimes been grieved that you did not better use your opportunities, but you have many noble qualities, and I see them now."

"To teach and keep them in order, and—and everything?"

"To do everything you have seen me do. You can do it, I am sure, if only you are willing."

"Yes'm, Miss Gaynor, I'll try," she answers, briefly, still looking straight before her; but I can see a great flush rise over her face, and her lips twitch a little.

"Give me your hand, then, Madge," her teacher says; and so, with her other hand in Lucy's, she stands between the worst girl and the best girl in school, and says good-bye quietly and tenderly. Many of the girls are weeping, and some are sobbing audibly.

"Girl, probably I shall be back among you in a day or two, and perhaps I shall never come back any more. I have been sick for a long time, and not really able to work, but I am all alone in the world and there is no one to work for me, and so I tried to make an effort, I am afraid, beyond my strength. And now before we part, for I may not see you all together again, I must ask you to forgive me, and try to forget all that was not pleasant between us. I know I was cross and irritable at times, but I was very often in pain—such pain as I trust you may never know any of you. I want to feel sure you will try to remember only the good and forget and forgive all the rest. Will you, girls?"

A silence. The clock ticks clearly. On the apple-tree in the schoolyard a robin is tilting to and fro, and pour-

ing out his wild sweet rhapsody of gurgled music.

How glad the hurried notes sound, breaking from his eager fluttering throat, as if life were almost too dear, too joyous.

He slings on, and on. Still on one speaks. All the hard hearts are melting now. We are weeping, each girl to herself, silently and heartily.

"But at least you must tell me you forgive me!" said the quiet voice again. And then Madge Barry cried out passionately, stamping her foot, "O Miss Gaynor, what to forgive? It was I! It was I! I did everything in the world—to hurt and trouble you. Oh, if you die I will die, too!" and she buried her face in her bare brown arms, in a wild despairing passion of tears.

Miss Gaynor lays her white hands gently on the bowed brown head, and Lucy Morris flings both her loving arms round the poor little breaking, penitent heart. Truly on earth as in heaven there is great joy over a "sinner that repenteth."

I scarcely knew what happened next, there was such a tumult of embraces and pardon and promises, of smiles shining through tears, and at last Miss Gaynor went away.

We crowded to the doors and windows, and watched her going slowly and wearily across the sunny level, her arm round Lucy's shoulder, their long shadows striking over the "seas of daisies and clover," but she never came back by the same path, and we never heard her voice in the old school-room again.

Madge Barry kept her word. She not only taught us carefully, wisely and faithfully for the next few days, but for all the remainder of the term.

The school throve and brightened under her strong kindly guidance. All the warm energies of her nature were turned into broad, healthy channels. She studied hard herself and seemed to become a woman all at once, firm, loving, reliable.

How much more dreamlike than any dream it was to see Madge seated in her chair of state, listening to the recitations, her hair still tossing over her fine open forehead, her air betokening calmness, determination.

When vacation came and broke the school up, for the first time within memory, the girls of Dane were sorry. Madge became a hard-working student, and graduated from the high school in due time, with honors. But she always says, seriously: "Miss Gaynor was the best friend I ever had, for she taught me to see my faults, by giving me her confidence when I felt I did not deserve it."

The robins sing over the teacher's grave, and Madge is a woman now, but she loves to recall the scene of that long-gone day, while she regrets her negligence of the past.

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

A man should first establish a reputation for bravery before he talks of forgiving his enemy through Christian charity. Those that forgive through charity and not through cowardice, do not talk. Physical pluck, which is a matter of nerves and is shared with bulldogs, occasionally writes for the magazines after a battle, if Pluck has been at college in its youth; but Courage is silent. Courage often sweats with fear, but it does not falter; pluck frequently does not know enough to sweat. You can find abundance of pluck among twelve-year-old boys on a football field.—Austin O'Malley.

The Importance of Little Things.

Dr. Johnson wisely said, "He who waits to do a great deal of good at once will never to anything." Life is made up of little things. It is but once in an age that occasion is offered for a great deed. True greatness consists in being great in little things. We should be willing to do a little good at a time, and never wait for a great deal of good at once. If we would do much good in the world we must be willing to do good in little things, little acts one after another, speaking a word here, giving help there, and setting a good example at all times; we must do the first good thing we can, and then the next, and so keep on.

Err, my friend, if that is possible, on the side of politeness. I do not think many men have died from colds caused by hats being removed when ladies were in an elevator. Usually, because you are strong and young, you can stand in a street car better than a woman, so consider your strength and do not sit while she stands. It may happen that she does not thank you, but her lack of manners does not excuse you.

After dark if you are walking with a lady you offer her the protection of your arm—the left one, for the right is reserved for defense—but do not commit such a blunder as to take hers, that is too great a familiarity. It is true that you may take the arm of an elderly lady, or an invalid if she needs to be helped through a crowd or across the street, but these are exceptional situations. Never just about a woman. The old-fashioned or ill-made gown worn by some young girl may look queer, but how do you know the why of the wearing it? What do you know of the mortifying tears that came when she saw herself in the old dress, but—well, there was no money for a better one. Make that girl happy by your polite attentions, and make her realize that a gentleman does not judge womankind by the finery worn.

How to be Popular.

Mr. MacLaren tells The Christian

World that the secret of popularity is kindness and helpfulness. The depreciation of kindness in private life, which is one of the features of our day, is very largely due to the fashion of intellectualism; but human nature below the surface of crazes and phrases remains the same, and his fellows still judge a man by his heart rather than by his head.

When the jury is selected, not from a coterie, but from the market place, the person who is ever kind will ever be preferred to the person who is clever; and "thoughtful," to use a cant word of our day is still less than warm-hearted. Walter Scott and Dickens will ever have a larger hold upon the people than Hardy and Meredith, not because their art is finer, but because their spirit is kinder. An affectionate child is more welcome than those monsters of modern precocity who furnish their foolish parents with sayings for quotation, and who have worn out all healthy sensation at the age of ten. The boy who is honest, unaffected, considerate, good natured, still receives the prize of respect and of love. No young carter is better liked than he who has a genuine interest in the aged and in little children, in poor lads and in weak people.

The Christian in Active Life. Men are asking everywhere this question: "Is it possible for a man to be engaged in the activities of modern life and still be a Christian? Is it possible for a man to be a broker, a shop keeper, a lawyer, a mechanic, is it possible for a man to be engaged in a business of to-day, and yet love his God and his fellowman as himself?" I do not know what transformations these dear businesses of ours have got to undergo before they shall be true and ideal homes for the child of God; but I do know that upon Christian merchants and Christian brokers and Christian lawyers and Christian men in business-to-day there rests an awful and a beautiful responsibility to prove, if you can prove it, that these things are capable of being made divine, to prove that a man can do the work that you have been doing this morning, and will do this afternoon, and yet shall love his God and his fellowman as himself. If he can not what business have you to be doing them? If he can, what business have you to be doing them so poorly, so carnally, so unspiritually, that men look on them and shake their heads with doubt? It belongs to Christ in men first to prove that man may be a Christian and yet do business; and in the second place, to show how a man, as he becomes a greater Christian, shall purify and lift the business that he does, and make it the worthy occupation of the Son of God.—Palimpsest Brooks.

Don't Be Drowned in Your Calling. A European traveler, says Success, tells of the following epitaph which he read on a tombstone in England: "Here lies—; he was born a man but died a grocer." The man had disappeared in his calling. We often find that a man's vocation has swallowed him; that it has completely overwhelmed him, that there is nothing left of him for any purpose outside his occupation.

It is a contemptible estimate of a vocation to regard it as the means of getting a living. The man who is not greater than his calling, who does not outgrow his vocation, so that it runs over on all sides is not successful. A man should be greater than the books he writes, greater than any speech he makes, than any house he builds, or any sermon he preaches.

Be not a great stenographer, or great book keeper, professor, merchant, farmer or doctor, merely, but a great man,—every inch a king. The man who is drowned in his vocation, lost in his calling, is of very little use in any community. No man can be truly great until he outgrows the vocation which gives him bread and butter. No man is really rich until he has learned to do without money, or to be greater than his check book.

Michael Angelo went one day into Raphael's studio during his absence, and, finding a beautiful but rather diminutive figure on the canvas displayed on the artist's easel, seized a brush and wrote under it *amplius* (larger). This is a word which I would advise every student to put up over his door and to write upon his heart. Whenever you choose an occupation, choose upward and never downward.

Uncongenial Work. The editors, says Success, frequently

receive letters from men and women in middle life who feel that they are round pegs in square holes, with no possibility of changing their occupation at their time of life.

We realize to the full how trying such conditions must be; and yet, even for those so unfortunately situated, there is light in the present and hope and encouragement in the future, if they will only take heart and resolve to perform cheerfully and to the best of their ability the duties of the position in which the unfavorable circumstances may have placed them, says that publication.

If you find yourself in a misfit occupation, by which you are able to earn the income necessary to support those dependent upon you, and feel that there is no possibility of changing without inflicting serious suffering on those dear to you, the only thing for you to do is to receive firmly to make the best of the situation, and, like the oyster which cannot expel the grain of sand which has entered within its shell, cover it with pearl and make it as beautiful as possible.

We know men and women who have so thoroughly mastered uncongenial surroundings that they have really become very successful in their work, in spite of the unfavorable circumstances. A brave, strong resolution to make the best of one's environment, whatever it may be, often works wonders.

If you find yourself irrevocably tied to an occupation for which you have no liking, and have been slighting your work because it was uncongenial, resolve now that you will do so no longer. Make up your mind to do everything intrusted to you, no matter how trivial it may seem, as well as it can be done.

Not only do it well, but do it cheerfully. Make a firm resolution that you will not be unhappy and be the cause of unhappiness in others, simply because you think you are not doing what you are best adapted to.

It is barely possible, too, that you may have made a mistake in your estimate of your own powers. But, however that may be, your duty is now clear, and no matter distasteful or disagreeable the work you are compelled to do is, provided it is in itself honest and honorable, you should throw yourself into it with all your might.

Put yourself under stern and rigid discipline each day; be true to your best instincts and faithful to the daily task imposed upon you; be animated with the high purpose of pleasing God rather than yourself, and it may be that the cultivation of this higher and nobler spirit will attract to you opportunities or better your condition which otherwise would never have opened to you. This, of course is only a bare possibility; but, by coming up to this higher plane by refusing to allow your spirit to be fettered by any incident of circumstances, you environment will actually be transformed. "No power on earth," said Lydie Marie Child, "can prevent my soul from fully converse with the angels, even though with my hand I feed pigs." If you do your work in this spirit, you will not only be happy your self, but, even as the spotless lily draws its sustenance from the dark unsightly mud, and sheds beauty and fragrance all around, you will diffuse a sunshine and happiness wherever you are.

Some of the noblest characters in the world's history have been evolved amid the most unfortunate and uncongenial surroundings. If you cannot attain fame or distinction according to the world's estimate, you can at least build up a beautiful and symmetrical character, and this constitutes the greatest success to which the most learned and most highly cultured can attain.

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