

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Sissy Porter.

A long line of boys sat on the bridge fishing, among them Will, better known as 'Sissy' Porter. He was called Sissy, not that there was anything effeminate about him, but because he never could be made to lose his temper enough to show it. Next to him sat Joe Baldwin, whose fiery outbursts of temper were always causing trouble.

The fish were biting well, and when bait grew scarce there was trouble between Joe and Sam Green over some that lay between them. Before anyone could interfere there was a splash, and Sam was in the water. He was a good swimmer, but to the surprise and horror of the boys he failed to come to the surface.

'Some of you get a boat; he's caught,' said Sissy, taking off his coat and boots.

Then, standing where Sam had sat, he gave a leap, and he too disappeared from view. Joe shivered and shook, while every second seemed an eternity. Would either of them ever be seen again?

There was a shout! Sissy had come to the surface, and—yes, that was Sam; but how limp and lifeless he looked! Was he dead? He seemed to be when they laid him on the beach; but he was brought to consciousness in time, and by night was all right, while Joe was ill; seriously so, the doctor feared.

Sissy, having gained permission to help nurse him, sat down by him and said, 'I think I know what the trouble is, Joe, and I mean to help you cure yourself.'

'O Sissy,' said Joe, 'I did not mean to, but if it had not been for you I should be a murderer. I had better die now, for I might be one some day if I live.'

'I felt so once,' was Sissy's reply.

'You!' Joe sat up in bed and said, 'Tell me about it.'

'That's why I came. I have often thought I would like to'; and Sissy told how he too by nature had a violent temper and had once come near injuring his own sister. He had gone through what Joe was feeling, and had reasoned the matter out till he came to the point where he realized that in giving way to his temper he was lowering himself to the level of the brute.

'Don't you see,' he said, 'that every time we give way to temper or evil passions we deface the image of God in our souls? It is a struggle at first to conquer self, but when you do, you begin to have a horror of defacing the image.'

'O, you give me hope, you give me hope!' cried Joe, who soon fell asleep.

Before long Sissy was known as William the Conqueror, while more than one boy was led to think seriously of his idea of 'defacing the image.'—Classmate.

## A Strange Night Bird.

(Miss Margaret W. Leighton, in the 'Sunday-School Messenger'.)

See that lichen-covered knot on the old hemlock log there by the brook? Step right up closer. Look! This is truly a wonderful knot, with two bright eyes, a pair of wings, and a long tail. Who would have thought that a bird could so closely resemble a cluster of lichens? Its plumage seems to be woven of darkness and light, soft grayish and brownish light, such as one sees here and there in the deep woods. How perfectly Nature has adapted the dress of this child of the twilight to his surroundings! Unlike the birds of daylight, he stretches himself lengthwise on the log when he is at rest, and looks so much like the bark that it takes sharp eyes to distinguish him from it.

As twilight deepens into night his clear, sweet 'whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will' sounds across the swamp. All day he has dozed on the log, but now it is time to be up and doing. The mosquitoes and gnats are out enjoying the warm night air, the beetles are booming clumsily along, and the night moths, emerging from their snug winter cradles, are shaking out their crumpled wings. Rich indeed is the feast spread for him who cares to partake.

'Whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will,' comes an answering cry over the brook, and the ardent suitor hastens to join his lady love. Together they dart through the darkening air,

hither and thither, catching now a fly, a gnat, a flat-bodied moth, or a lumbering beetle. They fly always in perfect silence, as befits the children of darkness. As they alight each utters its weird call, which is taken up by other whip-poor-wills far and near, till the woods and the swamps ring with their cries.

Before daybreak, when night is imperceptibly waning and morning drawing nearer, and the whip-poor-wills have fed abundantly, they are ready for play. They gather in some spot, perhaps the middle of the road, where the dust is thick and dry, for a frolic. Each buries himself and flutters the dust with wings and tail. Up he springs, shakes himself, calls to his companions, and capers about in an abandonment of joy.

By sunrise every one of these strange creatures has turned himself into a mossy stick, a lichen-covered knot, or a bit of flecked bark, to sleep till another sunset.

Madam Whip-poor-will is the most careless of housekeepers. She provides no cradle for her little ones, but trusts wholly to her protective coloring to shield them from their enemies. As you wander through the upland pasture on some fair June day you may chance upon Madam Whip-poor-will, crouching on her stony nest. She will allow you to come very close before she flies up, hoping always that your eyes will not be sharp enough to pierce her disguise, to distinguish her from the bare gray rock on which she is resting. But at last she knows you have discovered her. She flutters about on the ground with drooping wings, trying to make you believe she is injured, in order to lure you from her two precious eggs, white, spotted with lavender and brown, which lie in a little depression on the bare rock. Unable to draw your attention to herself, she flies still farther away, making a harsh sound, which is evidently an alarm call to her mate, who soon appears, circling far above your head and uttering the same harsh cry. Now and then he swoops swiftly downward, as if he would attack you; but, his courage failing before he reaches you, up he mounts again.

Little whip-poor-wills, unlike most baby birds, are not featherless when they leave the egg, but are covered with a warm coat of gray and yellow down. Their mouths are even more enormous in proportion than those of most young birds, and their mother and father must indeed work busily to keep them filled. They start in the late afternoon, skim over the fields and brook, catch their beaks full of flies, mosquitoes, and other small, soft-bodied insects suitable for a baby's supper, then home they dart and pass out the dainties, one by one, to the hungry children.

'On the hill

The sunset's rose is dying,

And the whip-poor-will is crying,

"Whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will; "

Soft, now shrill,

The whip-poor-will is crying,

"Whip-poor-will. "

—The 'Visitor.'

## A Fortunate Discharge.

(John T. Faris, in the 'Christian Union Herald'.)

When Ellis Buford read the announcement that John Hall, who had been to the Grand Central Business College, would 'teach the principles of shorthand to a select class for the small amount of five dollars per member,' he thought he saw the way to the solution of a difficulty.

He was in the last year at the Walnut Hills high school. In September he was to go to work in order that his sister Ellen, who had for the last two years helped to make the family living, might be free to take the year of normal training she still needed before she could begin teaching. On the death of their father they had agreed to this arrangement. Ellen's part would be fulfilled when he graduated; his part was to follow.

He had been wondering where he was to secure a situation. He had applied to Norcross & Bentley, but they said the next man they employed must be a stenographer. As he knew nothing of shorthand, and as even one term at business college was out of the question, he was disturbed. Yet, somehow, he must find work; Ellen must not be disappointed. For a week or two he turned over

various plans in his mind, but he saw no light.

Then his attention was called to John Hall's announcement. This promised just the help he needed. But—five dollars! Where was he to raise such a sum? With difficulty he had secured enough to buy clothes and books for the winter. He could borrow the amount, of course. But what if the investment should prove useless? He would be in debt—a small debt, to be sure, but a debt, just the same; and he would be no nearer a position than before.

When, however, he finally made up his mind that he must have the lessons, the money was not borrowed but earned by giving up the evenings and Saturdays of two weeks to help during inventory-taking at Norcross & Bentley's. So he felt safe in entering his name as a member of the shorthand class.

'If I don't make it go, there will be nothing lost,' he thought. 'But I "will" make it go!' he added with determination.

He laughed at himself when he took his first lesson. The simplicity of consonant strokes and vowel points surprised him, and he wondered that so many thought shorthand difficult. He saw himself safely and easily placed in a good position,—until he took his second lesson. Then difficulties began. It was easier to write his notes than to read them; and when, a little later he found that he was expected to forget about vowel points, and to unlearn much that he had already learned in order to equip himself for facility in word signs and phrase-making, he was discouraged.

He was about ready to give up when John Hall announced that the five-dollar course was completed. 'I have given you the principles,' he said. 'On this foundation any of you can go ahead and, by faithful practice, become proficient stenographers.'

Most of the class gave up right then. It had been hard enough to maintain their interest when they were in almost daily touch with their teacher; now that he was going to the next town to teach another class their further progress seemed out of the question. Ellis felt as his classmates did, until he realized that, even if they felt they could afford to give up, he could not. His promise to Ellen must be kept; and he would become a stenographer.

Through the spring months he practiced faithfully. There were days when he could give but a few minutes to his note-books, because his regular lessons took most of his time; but there were other days when he was able to devote from one to three hours to his 'scribbling,' as Ellen laughingly called it. She had not much faith in his success. 'If my graduation from the Normal depends on your shorthand, I guess my diploma will never be signed,' she said, rather cruelly, Ellis thought. And he was all the more determined to succeed.

When school closed, and he had the long summer days at his disposal, it was easier. It was his habit to work all morning over his notes, then to take the afternoon for recreation, except so much of it as was needed for helping about home. In the evening he gave two hours more to study. Still more rapid progress was made when he arranged with Tom Monroe to read to him an hour each morning while he wrote. In return for this service he gladly gave his help to his friend in doing up the morning chores.

With the coming of September he found he had acquired a fair speed, and was reasonably accurate. Then he went to Norcross & Bentley's and offered his services. When he learned there was no vacancy there, he sought the Adams Implement Co., only to be disappointed again. But he soon learned that disappointments were to be expected. Twenty times he was denied work before he finally secured a position.

And it was not what at the beginning of his search, he would have called a good position. The pay was only ten dollars a week. He was to assist in keeping books and do a number of things not ordinarily included in the work of a stenographer. Then the firm did not have the highest standing in the city; the Elberon Desk Company's methods had not been such as to commend them to other houses.

'Yet, as it seems to be the Elberon Desk Company or nothing, I must go on its pay.'