

BOYS AND GIRLS

Louise Ferguson's Cure.

(Pansy, in the 'Junior Christian Endeavor World'.)

'Louise!' called her mother, 'are you being as quick as you can, dear?'

'Yes, mother,' Louise answered, and she dropped the book she had been reading to seize the hair-brush. Just what she meant by saying, 'Yes, mother,' it might have been hard for Louise to explain, though she told her conscience that it meant she was going to hurry. She knew she had been up long enough to be fully dressed; yet she was still barefooted, with her hair in snarls, and her fresh white dress hanging over a chair waiting to be put on.

'I wonder,' she said as she caught sight of it, 'why mamma gave me a white dress for this morning. We must be going to have company.'

Just then she caught sight of the new waist she had been making the day before for her Paris doll, Adele. Down went the hair-brush, and, seizing the waist, Louise ran in search of Adele. That young lady could not be found for some time, but was at last discovered behind the couch in the library, in a spot which had served for a lake when she was playing the part of one who had fallen in and been drowned. Louise fished her out, and began to try on the waist.

Then came her mother's voice.

'Louise, are you ready? It is time for prayers.'

Louise dropped the doll in dismay. It did not seem possible that it could be really half-past seven already. She began to search for the hair-brush, and could not remember where she laid it down.

But there, on the bureau, was her new perfumery-bottle not yet opened. She wondered whether it really smelled of 'new-mown hay,' and felt as if she could not wait any longer before finding out. If she could get just a whiff, she could tell. She untied the blue ribbon, lifted off the kid cover, poked at the cork with her fingers, then with the scissors, and at last pushed the cork into the bottle and the scissors into her fingers.

'Mean old thing!' she said, as she set down the bottle and sucked her finger.

Meantime, down-stairs, Louise's mother was moving toward the hall, when Mr. Ferguson said, 'If I were you, mamma, I shouldn't call that little girl again.'

'Oh, Ralph!' said Mrs. Ferguson. 'Not on this morning, of all others?'

'This is the morning of all others when it seems to me it should not be done,' the father said firmly. 'The child has been up for an hour, and has been twice warned already.'

'I know it, but—could you bear it to have her lose all the pleasures of this day just by a little heedlessness?'

'Dear mamma,' said Louise's father, now speaking gently, 'was it not after a long talk that you and I decided we must try to help our little girl break this habit of hers, even though it should cost her and us a good deal to do so? Consider how many times we have tried in other ways to help her. Didn't we both promise we would be firm in teaching her a lesson the next time she compelled it?'

If Louise could have heard her mother sigh, she would not have sat so idly on

the window-seat, sucking her finger and watching two birds engage in a lively quarrel over the place for their nest.

'It is all true,' said the mother. 'You are right, I know, and a promise is a "promise," but—oh, dear! I "hope" she is ready.' Then she went to the kitchen.

'Norah, will you step upstairs and see if Louise is almost ready? Don't say anything to her about the plans for breakfast; that is part of the surprise.'

In two minutes Norah was back.

'She isn't ready at all, ma'am,' she said. 'She has no shoes nor stockings on, and her hair isn't even combed out. She sits in the window, talking to Jennie Brooks across the garden.'

Mrs. Ferguson went back to the sitting-room. Her face was very sad. They talked together, father and mother; then Norah was called and given careful directions, and then the great hamper, packed with all sorts of good things, was carried out, and Mrs. Ferguson began to put on her bonnet; but all the brightness had gone out of her face.

'The great four-horse mountain waggon has stopped at your front door!' called out Jennie Brooks to Louise, and Louise skipped to the guest-chamber and then peeped through the blinds.

Sure enough! And papa was bringing out a hamper. Aunt Laura and Cousin Dick must be going to King Mountain. How mean of them! Dick had promised that she should go with them the very next time. Yes, there was Dick now! If she only had her dress on, she might call to him and remind him of his promise. She looked about her eagerly for something to wrap herself in; nothing was at hand. Why, there was mamma coming out, all dressed in white and with her hat on! Oh, dear! she was getting into the waggon! And papa, too!

'Mamma!' the little girl called frantically. 'Oh, mamma! wait!' She rushed into her own room, and began to draw on stockings and shoes in the wildest haste, all the time crying, 'Mamma! "mamma!"' But the great mountain waggon rolled away; she could hear the tramp of eight pairs of feet down the road.

What did it mean? What 'could' it all mean? Her mother and father could never have gone to King Mountain, of all places in the world, without her! Hadn't she been wanting to go, all the spring? They must have just driven to the other street for some of the party, and meant to come back for her. She dressed fast enough now. The hair-brush was found; and in a wonderfully short time Louise was all dressed and on her way down-stairs, all the while listening eagerly for the rumble of wheels that never came.

'Your breakfast is ready, Miss Louise,' said Norah.

'Norah,' said Louise, her voice fairly trembling with eagerness, 'where are papa and mamma gone? Did they go before breakfast? Are they coming back for me?'

'No more they ain't,' said Norah, answering the last question first. 'They won't be back until night. They've gone to King Mountain, child, twenty of them, and took their breakfast, and luncheon, too, along, as nice a one as ever went up there, if I do say it that shouldn't. They felt awful bad to go without you; your

pa looked like he was goin' to a funeral, and your ma 'most cried; but she said she gave you more than an hour to dress and called you twice, and that was the third time this week you had bothered in the same way, and they had just "got" to show you how silly it was.'

All of these words Louise did not hear. She had buried her head in one of the porch pillows, and was sobbing as if her heart would break.

What a long, strange day that was for Louise Ferguson! At first she could not get used to the thought that her father and mother had really gone away for a long, bright day of pleasure and left her at home. Nothing like this had ever happened to her before. She ate no breakfast; the thought of it choked her. She knew just the green and lovely spot where the mountain party would stop for their breakfast; but she did not know, or at least realize, what a sad breakfast that would be for her father and mother, nor how utterly she had spoiled their day's pleasure.

After a while she went up-stairs, and put Adele away in a closet. She thrust the yellow waist into the bottom of Adele's trunk, and said she should never finish the horrid, hateful thing. In this way for an hour or two she got what comfort she could by blaming everything and everybody, except the right one, for her trouble. Even the robins were scolded for helping to make her late.

The day wore away by slow degrees. Louise practised her music for two whole hours, instead of one, and learned all her lessons for Monday, and put her room in very nice order, and finished the story-book which had hindered her in the morning, and commenced a letter to her friend, Alice Wood.

'Your mother said you might go over to your Grandma Ferguson's this afternoon if you wanted to,' Norah had told her at dinner-time. Louise thought about it, and decided that she did not want to go. Grandma would be 'so' astonished that she was left at home, and would ask ever so many questions; and Mrs. Blair, grandma's nurse, would nod her head and say, 'I told you your dawdling ways would get you into trouble!' Louise could almost hear her voice, and did not like it. She would not go to grandma's.

At four o'clock the lonely girl wandered into the garden and grape-arbor; and there Norah came to her, dressed for a walk.

'Your mother said I might go to the train with a package for father when he passes on the four forty-five,' she explained. 'I'll be back in a little while; I have locked the front door, and you would better turn the key in the back door, too, if you go in the house before I get back.'

Even Norah could have a holiday this June day, everybody but poor Louise, who still pitted herself. The arbor looked very lonesome to her, and she decided to go to the attic and look over the picture papers piled there. It is true this was a rainy-day pleasure, but Louise could not settle to anything else.

Seated among the papers, making herself believe she was hunting for a certain picture hard to find, the lonely little girl heard voices.