



OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

A LAZY BOY'S VACATION.

I tell you I'm the gladdest  
That we ain't got no school,  
When me and Johnny Braddock  
Goes swimmin' in the pool.

We ain't afraid of nothin',  
And just swim through right slick;  
I wish I'd learn my lessons  
And do my sums as quick!

But boys ain't made to study  
And sit all day in school;  
It's lots more fun a-swimmin'  
With Johnny in the pool.

**NO SMOKER.**—At a conference of the Chicago postoffice authorities it was recently decided to hereafter employ no boy who smokes cigarettes or who is known to have once been addicted to the habit.

Heretofore there has been a rule in force that boys employed by the office could not smoke while working, but believing that smoking has a demoralizing effect, and because of the need of the most intelligent and active boys, it is thought wise to make closer restrictions.

An examination is soon to be held when 700 youths will enter into competition for positions in the post-office, and the new order will have no small effect upon so large a number of applicants.

The clause relating to cigarettes says:—

"No small boys will be allowed to participate in the examination, since only the best-equipped boys mentally and physically are wanted in this service, and under no circumstances will a boy who smokes cigarettes be employed." The service referred to is that of special delivery messengers, for which appointments are made from this examination.

**HELEN'S PRIZE DINNER.**—"Oh, Helen, I have good news for you! Mother has just received a letter from your guardian, and he says he's coming to see you on Thursday."

Helen looked up from the placque which she was painting. She did not quite agree with her cousin Bert in thinking that he brought good news. She had seen her guardian but once, and that was when he had left her with her aunt, more than a year before.

"What makes you look so frightened?" asked Bert. "One would think he was an ogre coming to devour you. I'll tell you, Helen, you might offer up that placque that you are painting as a sacrifice to his ogre-ship; its beauty would surely propitiate him. Oh, how I love the fragile and beautiful sunflower!" he added, in a lackadaisical tone, and in exact imitation of his cousin's manner.

"Go away, you horrid boy!" exclaimed Helen. "You needn't make fun of my painting; and sunflowers are beautiful, even if you don't think so."

"Dear me, is that so? Well, there's nothing like being an artist—is there, Helen?" said Bert. And away he went, whistling, downstairs.

Helen, meanwhile, had lapsed into a brown study, dreaming and building air-castles, thinking that some day she would be a great artist and paint wonderful pictures. That was her ambition, and, as she was rather proud of her artistic tastes, she painted away vigorously.

Her aunt Jane, to whose care she had been left by her dead mother, worried a great deal about her. Aunt Jane was very practical, and thought Helen's ideas about art nonsensical. But as she would not force her to do what was distasteful to her, the girl was generally left to her own devices.

Her boy cousins, however, teased her unmercifully, especially Bert. The

younger, who delighted in shocking her.

"He is really dreadful," she said once in confidence to a girl friend. "He loves onions and squashes, and all those horrid things, and he doesn't know a pretty thing when he sees it. One night he actually ate eleven biscuits for tea, and then boasted of it afterward, as if it were a thing to be proud of."

Thursday came, and with it Helen's guardian. He arrived in the morning; and by dinner-time Helen, whose reserve had worn off, had told him all her ambitions; that she wished to be a great artist and study in Europe. Her guardian, Mr. Douglas, seemed rather amused than otherwise, and at the dinner table he suddenly turned the conversation by asking Helen if she could cook and sew, as he thought all girls should first learn the household arts.

Helen did not know what to say. She did not know a thing about housekeeping, and rather looked down upon it. Her embarrassment was further increased by Bert, who was nudging her under the table, and fairly choking with fun.

Mr. Douglas merely added that he would like to have a little talk with her on the subject after dinner. Nothing more was said about it during the meal; but Bert, at intervals, would incoherently mutter something about sunflowers, which made Helen turn very red.

After dinner Helen and Mr. Douglas had a long talk. He did not disapprove of Helen's tastes, but he wished her first to learn that which was useful; and he therefore made a proposition which nearly took her breath away.

"I will take you to Europe," he said, "and let you study art there, on one condition, and that is, that the next time I come you will have a dinner prepared for me, cooked entirely by yourself. We shall let Aunt Jane into the secret, and she will be fine arts. What do you say, little girl?" he added, with a laugh.

"But, Mr. Douglas, it is so great a reward for so little a task," said Helen.

"You will not find that it is so little a task as you think," was Mr. Douglas's reply. Remember, everything must be exactly right, even to the seasoning; in the meanwhile, I think that, if I were you, I should paint but little, and should give my attention to this one thing."

Helen promised.

She was eager to begin her lessons, and the next day, after Mr. Douglas had gone, she went to work in earnest, much to the satisfaction of her aunt.

Bert and Rob hung round the kitchen, criticising her every effort. She did very well, however, and under her aunt's tuition she improved rapidly.

Bert was her greatest drawback: he would pretend to help her, and then would do just the opposite. One day, when the minister was coming to tea, her aunt was taken with a severe headache and the cook took sudden leave. So Helen coaxed her aunt to let her make the cake. Bert, apparently all ardor and devotion, begged to help her, and asked her to let him read the recipe for her, while she gathered the ingredients together.

Helen agreed to this, and Bert sat down and read off the recipe; but, oh, deplorable wickedness! he read most of the quantities wrong!

The cake was made, and it looked very tempting, indeed; but when it was cut at table it was found to be as hard and heavy as lead. The poor minister had indigestion for weeks, and Bert was ignominiously expelled from the kitchen.

At last, after several months, Helen received a letter from Mr. Douglas, saying that he was coming to spend a day with her, and that he hoped his "little girl" would have an excellent dinner prepared for him. Helen was delighted. She determined to have a "course" dinner—

soup, fish, a roast and vegetables, and finally dessert, with fruit and coffee.

She was very busy making her preparations, going herself to market, and giving her orders with a very important air.

Meanwhile Bert was concocting a scheme of his own. The affair with the cake had not taught him a lesson. The spirit of mischief was strong within him. He heard that his cousin was going to prepare a dinner for her guardian, and his chief desire now was to spoil it. Helen had behaved rather roly toward him since the cake episode; and as he was really fond of her, this did not please him. So, before the day appointed for the dinner, he set himself to plan what he would do.

"She will be so watchful that it will be hard to play the old worn-out tricks of putting salt for sugar, or sugar for salt, or of having the cream sour or the butter bad. It really is very perplexing," he thought. "Ah, I have it! the clock—the clock's the thing! I'll get the kitchen clock ahead when she's out of the way for a minute, and she'll be governed by it, and never notice the change; she is so absent-minded. Good idea! I'll have things overdone or underdone, to suit my fancy."

"I say, Helen, wouldn't you like to have me help you?" said Bert, as he peered through the kitchen window and saw Helen, with flushed face, vigorously beating eggs.

"No, thank you! Of course not. I am to do this all myself; and even if I weren't I fear I shouldn't let you help me!"—this last with a decided emphasis on the "you."

Bert said nothing, but turned away, whistling, and started as if he were going down-town; but, instead, he stole around the house and climbed upon the roof of a small shed, where he could see Helen's every movement, but where she could not see him.

How important she looked as she bustled around, tasting one thing, seasoning another!—very pretty, too, Bert thought, with a big pink gingham apron tied close up to her chin, her cheeks flushed, and her dark eyes bright with excitement.

Indeed, he almost relented, as he saw her put the meat into the oven and heard her say, "Now, if it only turns out well I shall be happy."

The vegetables and the pudding soon followed; and now Bert began to watch his chance to run in and set the clock ahead. He was beginning to think that the time would never come; but at last he saw his cousin drop the cabbage leaf which she was using as a fan and run down the cellar stairs.

"Now's my chance," he muttered as he slid off the roof and hurried into the kitchen. It was but the work of a moment to put the clock ahead twenty-five minutes; and then, his coupling not appearing, he looked around to see what else he could do. A box of what looked like cayenne pepper stood on the table and he hastily emptied about a tablespoonful of it into the soup; and then, hearing his cousin's step on the stairs, he retreated, hoping no one had seen him. No one had. Helen had banished Aunt Jane to the parlor, Rob was down-town and the cook was away on a holiday.

Helen emerged from the cellar and glanced at the clock. "My! How long I have been down there!" she exclaimed. "I wonder if that old clock is fast again! It's nearly time for the meat to come out! I'll just run and take a look at the table, to see if the flowers are all right. There's the door-bell. That must be Mr. Douglas. What an odd gentleman he is, to be sure, to think of taking me to Europe just for this little job of cooking him a dinner!"

So she soiled herself as she bustled about and made her final preparations.

"Dear me, I'm so nervous about that seasoning, for if it isn't just right it will spoil the whole thing. I do hope the meat is as well done as it looks," she added, carefully drawing it from the oven. Now I'll 'dish up,' as Bridget says; I'd better call Anne to carry in the things, while I fix myself up for dinner—my dinner," she said gleefully as she buttered the peas and arranged the corn in an artistic pyramid. "There, now, Anne, all is ready, and you may ring the bell;" and away she went, singing, upstairs.

Bert, after a while, had begun to feel slightly uneasy. He did not know that a trip to Europe depended upon that dinner, but he did know that Helen had cooked it to please her guardian, and he began to think that he might have gone a little too far. "I'm always plaguing her, and now she'll dislike me worse than ever," he said. "True, she's acted very coolly toward me lately, but I deserved it. Well, now I've done it, and I'm going to make the best of it—that's all."

"Hello, Bert, what makes you look so gloomy? How's my lady? I hope you haven't been teasing her this morning," said Rob, as he entered the door. "Really," continued he, "you tease her entirely too much. Mother thinks so. Helen is a fine girl, and I am sure she has a right to her little whims. Come long; there's the dinner bell."

Bert arose and followed his brother. It had been long since he had so remorseful about anything. Helen was seated by Mr. Douglas, looking very happy, and talking to him gaily about her experiences during the last few months.

The soup was served first.

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Bert, who was in a brown study, was suddenly aroused by hearing Mr. Douglas say, "The soup is excellent, my dear. It really does you great credit."

If a cannon-ball had struck Bert he could hardly have been more surprised.

He stared at Mr. Douglas with open mouth. "Why, how can that be?" he said to himself, in a bewildered way. "I must have put nearly an ounce of red pepper into it."

Then he tasted it himself; it was excellent and the seasoning was perfect.

Soon the meat and vegetables were brought on.

Bert watched both anxiously. But the meat was done to a turn, and as in a dream he heard Mr. Douglas saying that it was one of the best dinners he had ever eaten.

"I really don't understand it," thought Bert. "I set that clock ahead nearly half an hour, and the things ought to be dreadfully underdone."

"What's the matter, Bert?" said Helen; "are you afraid to eat your dinner?"

Then he began to feel that he was hungry, and, putting aside his feelings, he did ample justice to Helen's dinner.

A very good dessert followed the dinner; but by that time Bert was rather annoyed.

"Well, that is a good joke on me," he decided; and I've made myself miserable for nothing; both the whole thing, anyhow!"

He kept out of the way that afternoon, but toward evening went for a walk. He went farther than he intended, and then he stopped, to see a friend and stayed to supper.

It was moonlight when he came home, and as he was going through the garden he heard a voice saying: "Why, Bert."

Turning around he saw Helen, looking very pretty in the moonlight, with her white dress and the roses at her waist.

"You bad boy, why haven't you come to congratulate me? Where have you been hiding yourself?" she cried.

"Your dinner was a great success."

Helen, if that is what you mean," he answered.

"No, I mean my going to Europe," she said.

"Going to Europe? Why, what under the sun do you mean?"

"I forgot—of course you didn't know;" and then she told him of her guardian's offer, and how the trip depended on the success of the dinner.

"Oh, Helen, I'm so sorry I didn't know that," said Bert involuntarily. "Why so very sorry?" queried his cousin.

"Didn't you go by the kitchen clock when you cooked the dinner this morning?" answered Bert.

"By that old thing? No, indeed, I didn't. It's almost worthless. I went by the watch Auntie gave me at Christmas time. But why do you ask?"

Bert could hardly speak for laughing; and then he told her all.

Helen gave a ringing laugh.

"Oh, you naughty boy!" she said. "To think that you could have done such a thing! But the joke was decidedly on you. I don't yet understand about that pepper, though. Where did you get it?"

"It was in a red tin box on the table, and—"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Helen. "You dear old goose, that was a kind of preparation that comes for soups. Auntie always uses it. I wasn't going to put any in, but now I see you did it for me."

"Well," said Bert, "I am very glad it ended so, and I'll never tease you again, Helen."

"Well, if you keep that promise, I'll never tell any one about this affair, and we'll have the joke all to ourselves. Come, let us go in now, for it is growing late."

Helen went to Europe and studied art there for a long time. She never was called a great artist, but she was certainly a very good one.

A picture by her, exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, represented a little girl, standing in an old-fashioned kitchen, with a flushed, important face, beating something in a bowl, while through the open window there leaned a boy with brown, sunburnt face and laughing eyes, looking in at the little maiden.

It excited much admiration, for it was beautifully done. But it was not for sale; and after it had been exhibited Helen took it away and sent it to Bert, who had become a minister, and had the charge of a large parish.

And it hangs in his study to this day.

**AN EFFECTIVE LESSON**

A drunkard in New Orleans recently was saved from continuing his career of dissipation in a peculiar manner. The young man in question was of a fine family, and had splendid gifts, but was going down as fast as it was possible for a man to go through strong drink. His friends had pleaded with him, but he had taken their warnings as an insult. One day one of them, who was a court stenographer, determined to try a new tack with him. He was sitting at a restaurant one evening, when the young man in question came in with a companion, taking the table next to him, and sitting down with his back to him, and not seeing him. He was just drunk enough to be talkative about his private affairs, and on the impulse of the moment the stenographer pulled out his note-book, and took a full shorthand report of every word he said. It was the usual maudlin folly of a young man with his brain muddled by drink, and included a number of highly candid details of his daily life—things which when he was sober he would as soon have

thought of putting his hand in the fire as speaking about to a casual acquaintance. The next morning the stenographer copied the whole thing neatly, and sent it around to his office. In less than ten minutes he came tearing in with "What is this, anyhow?" "It's a stenographic report of your monologue at the restaurant last evening," his friend replied, and gave him a brief explanation. "Did I really talk like that?" he asked faintly. "I assure you it is an absolutely verbatim report," was the reply. He turned pale and walked out. He never drank another drop.

There are many men who would cease, not only the sin of drunkenness, but other sins as well, if they could see themselves as other people see them.—Herald and Presbyter.

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