

## ✻ ✻ The Story Page. ✻ ✻

### Boys and Mothers.

BY SIDNEY DAYRE.

School out? Shout, scream, jump, race, wrestle—everything by which boys let out their joy at being no longer quiet!

"Let's go up the hill for nuts," was the cry.

"Yes—let's."

"You come too, Cliff," as one boy worked himself out of the small crowd just let loose from the country schoolhouse and went out of the yard.

"No, I can't."

"Why not? We'll have lots of fun."

"I'd like to." Cliff cast a longing look up the hill shining with the scarlet and gold of autumn. Very well he knew the fun of hearing the brown nuts rattle down an accompaniment to the shouts of merry boys.

"Come on, then."

For a moment Cliff wavered, then braced up.

"No," he said. "My mother'll be looking out for me. She always feels a little afraid about the bridge, and if I am not home just at the time she gets frightened."

"Pshaw!" cried Tom Barnes, with a sniff. "As if I'd be tied to my mother as you are. I can't go up the hill 'cause my foot hasn't got over the sprain and it hurts. But if I could, I'd go, mother or no mother."

Cliff was angry, and cast about for something sharp enough to say.

"Perhaps I would if I had such a mother as yours."

"What's that?" cried Tom, flaming up.

"I say," answered Cliff, delighted at seeing the effect of his words, "that if I had such a mother as yours I suppose I'd do just as you do. But I haven't such a one. I wouldn't have a mother who wasn't worth minding."

Cliff had multiplied his words, flinging them out with more and more relish at Tom's anger. He now turned and ran away with a laugh.

With a shriek of rage Tom started to follow him, but was soon forced by the pain in his foot to stop. As he continued to shout his anger after the enemy, the teacher came from the schoolhouse and went towards him. The other boys were by this time beyond hearing.

"Did you hear him, Miss Morse?—Did you hear what he said? I'll thrash him tomorrow," doubling up his fists, till he takes every word of it back. And won't you punish him, too?"

"Well, I don't know," said Miss Morse, drawing the boy to a step and sitting down beside him. "What did he say?"

"He said—why, he said," said Tom, in his excitement not really remembering what had been said, "he said that my mother wasn't a good woman."

"I didn't hear that, and I could hear it all through the open window."

"Well, he said he wouldn't—wouldn't—like to have a mother like mine."

"Not exactly that, either. I heard him say he wouldn't have a mother that was not worth minding. And I don't know, but I agree with him. I shouldn't like that kind myself."

"And who says my mother isn't worth minding?" said Tom, bristling again.

"Well, don't you?"

"No. I never said such a thing in my life."

"See here, Tom," Miss Morse smoothed the boy's hair and fanned his hot face with his hat, "don't you ever stop to think that there are different ways of saying things—that our actions speak as loudly as our words? More loudly I should say, for we can say what is not true, but what we do shows really what we are and what we think. Now, how does anybody know your mother is worth obeying? Do they learn it from you?"

Tom stared for a moment at his teacher, then gave a low whistle. She sat in silence while one new thought after another crowded upon his mind.

How did anybody know it anyhow? Tom had never really intended to be unfaithful to his gentle little mother, who indulged him far more than was good for him. Now he recalled the morning chores she asked of him. If he felt like doing them they were done, but more often they were left for some one else. If there was nothing "up" among the boys after school he heeded her mildly-expressed wish that he should come home promptly; otherwise he stayed out as long as he pleased. No, certainly, nobody would know from him that his mother was worth obeying.

"I don't know Cliff's mother," went on Miss Morse, "because I haven't been here very long, and it is quite a walk to their house. But I want to know her, for I feel sure from what I have seen of Cliff that she must be a good woman. When you see a boy ready to think of his mother, anxious to keep her from anxiety, willing to give up a pleasure rather than run the risk of distressing her, I can give a pretty good guess what she must be." Tom colored deeply. "My mother's good," he growled, under his breath.

"I haven't a doubt of it, my boy. But how are people to know it through you, unless you are? People will judge her by you. If you do not honor her by obedience, how can you wonder at their thinking that, as Cliff expressed it, she is not worth minding?"

"But she is," exclaimed Tom, firing up again.

"I wish more boys would remember," said Miss Morse, gently, after another little pause, "what joy and comfort they can be to their mothers if they will. And, oh, that they would remember it while they have time. There must come a time, you know, when their voices will be hushed. Our words can never reach them when the sod is between them and us, no matter how we ache and ache to tell them how much we did love, love them, in spite of all our careless ways."

Tom set his lips hard together as he choked down a lump in his throat.

"And I think those of us whose mothers are mild and quiet, not sharp and loud, but low-voiced in their way of letting us know what they want of us—we ought to feel special tenderness for them—don't you?"

"Yes'm, I do," said Tom, getting up. "Good bye."

"Why, Tommy, you're home so early?" said his mother, looking up with a pleased smile as he entered the room at home. Tom liked the smile; it was so different from the troubled look with which she usually met his home-comings.

"Yes—'cause," he began, in the embarrassment of the new feeling which he did not like to show, "my foot hurt—and—say, mother," with a burst, "I'm coming home when you want me to. Every time."

"Are you, dear? Well, that will be a great comfort to mother."

She looked after him as he went about some small duties neglected for days, and there was a mist in her eyes along with the smile as she thought:

"The dear boy will forget it all before long. But it's good to have him think it."

Cliff, arriving at home, found the house quiet and his mother away. It was disappointing and he growled a little.

"There, now! I might have stayed with the boys as well as not."

And the feeling stayed with him as the lonely evening dragged on and she did not come home until late. But the last of it went out of his head when she said:

"My good boy! I had to go to your aunt who was ill. But I should not have had an easy moment if I had not felt sure you would be at home just when I expected you."

Tom did not offer Cliff the threatened thrashing. Indeed, it seemed from that day on to take so much of his energy to show that his mother was as well worth minding as Cliff's mother, as to leave little opportunity for quarreling with anybody.

And Cliff never knew the effect which his brave stand for duty to his mother had had upon one of his mates. For some of us is ordered this joy of seeing the blessing following one good word or work, but for most is simply the faith, not to be changed to sight till we reach the great hereafter, that our good must surely reach into the lives of those about us.—The advance.

### ✻ ✻ What Ralph Saw. ✻ ✻

Ralph had been sick a whole month, and now that he was able to sit up again he liked to have his chair by the window, where he could look out and watch the men who were at work upon a new house which was being built next door.

He was so glad that the men were at work there just at that time, for the days sometimes seemed very long to him, and he liked to see the house growing before his eyes. Nothing else entertained him for so long a time.

But one day the funniest thing happened at the new house. A strange workman appeared on the scene, but this workman hindered more than he helped.

Ralph was at his accustomed place at the window and was watching a carpenter who was measuring pieces of lumber for a certain part of the building. Ralph saw him take out his measure and mark the length with a pencil. He then laid the pencil down beside him while he sawed the board. Pretty soon he looked around to get his pencil, and it was gone. He looked about a few minutes; then he took another pencil from his pocket. He marked another board with this and laid it down as before, and when he wanted it again, it, too, was gone.

The man now began to look vexed, and he searched all about, probably expecting to find some mischievous boy around, Ralph thought. But finding no boy and no pencils, he borrowed another pencil of one of the workmen, and this time, when he got through using it, he put it in his pocket. So he managed in this way to keep the one he had borrowed.

Presently he seemed to have measured all the boards

he needed, and then he began nailing them in place. He took a handful of nails from the pocket of the big apron that he wore and laid them down within easy reach. He used a few of them, and when he reached around for more there were no more there. Then he stood straight up, took off his cap and scratched his head.

Ralph had been watching all this time, and had seen where all the missing articles went, and now at the man's perplexity he laughed aloud. Mamma, who was in the next room, heard the merry laugh, and it did her good. She determined to go in as soon as she finished the dusting and see what was amusing Ralph so much.

After the loss of his nails, the workman seemed to think something was wrong. He looked all about, questioned some of the other carpenters, and finally went to work once more. But this time he took the nails from his pocket only as he needed them, and once in a while he would look around as if watching for somebody. But as nobody appeared, he at last seemed quite to forget his mysterious losses, and to work on in his usual manner.

It was a warm day, and as the sun rose higher he began to feel very warm. Ralph could see how heated he looked, and finally he took out a large red handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

He seemed a very absent-minded sort of workman, for now he laid his handkerchief down beside him while he again turned to his work.

"Mamma, come quick, quick!" Ralph shouted, and mamma hurried to his side.

He pointed to the window. "Now, watch that man's handkerchief," he said. "Don't take your eyes off from it."

Mamma wondered what Ralph meant, but she did as he said, and pretty soon, when the man had gone to his work and quite turned his back to the handkerchief, down swooped a big black crow, picked up the handkerchief and flew off with it.

Then how Ralph did laugh and clap his hands. "It's just too funny, mamma," he said. And then he explained to her how the crow had been playing jokes on the carpenter all the morning. Mamma laughed too, and then she said, "I think, Ralph, that we will have to arrest Mr. Crow. Shall we tell the man who his tormentor is?"

"Yes," said Ralph; only do please wait till he finds his handkerchief gone."

So they waited, and presently the man turned to take up his handkerchief, for he had grown very warm again. His look of blank astonishment when he found it was gone was too much for both Ralph and mamma, and they laughed till the tears stood in their eyes.

Then mamma went out on the front steps and tried to call to the man, but he was shouting and gesticulating to the other workmen in such a frantic way that she had to go over to the building before she could make him hear her.

Ralph watched from the window. He saw the man turn at last and listen to what mamma had to say, and he saw them both go around to the further end of a pile of lumber, where there was a space between two boards, and there, safely stored away, were the pencils, nails and the handkerchief, as they expected.

When Ralph saw mamma point up into the branches of a tree which stood near, and from which, as she did so, there came a cry of "Caw! caw! caw!"

The other workmen shouted with laughter. At first the subject of Mr. Crow's practical jokes was inclined to be angry, but at last his better nature conquered, and he laughed with the rest.

As he went back to work Ralph saw him take the handkerchief and tie it under his chin, and mamma explained when she came in that he said he would have to tie his cap on or the bird would be flying off with that next.

But Jim Crow seemed satisfied with his morning's work and after his trick was discovered he flew off home, and the poor workman was left in peace.

As Ralph was much better the next day, mamma said she believed that his laughing so hard over Jim Crow's pranks had done him more good than medicine.—Southern Churchman.

### ✻ ✻ A Suggestion From Dennis. ✻ ✻

When Dennis mentioned the matter for the first time, I was almost indignant. We were sitting by the fireidle one evening; he had been reading the paper, and I was almost dozing over a dull book, when he looked up quite suddenly and said: "I have been thinking, Clara, that you and I should begin giving systematically."

"Giving systematically to what?" I asked in genuine surprise, and endeavored to look wide-awake and interested.

"Why, to the church and missions, and so on," explained Dennis.

"Give what?" I said again, setting my lids a trifle