

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## A Song for Spring.

List! List! The buds confer;  
This noonday they've had news of her;  
The south bank has had views of her;  
The thorn shall exact his dues of her;  
    The willows adream  
    By the fresh stream  
Shall ask what boon they choose of her.  
Up! Up! The mold's astir;  
The would-be green has word of her;  
Root and germ have heard of her,  
    Coming to break  
    Their sleep, and wake  
Their hearts with every bird of her.  
See! See! How swift concur  
Sun, wind, and rain at the name of her,  
A-wondering what became of her;  
The fields flower at the flame of her;  
    The glad air sings  
    With dancing wings  
And the silvery-shrill acclaim of her.  
—Charles G. D. Roberts, in 'Century.'

## How Two Boys Crossed the Niagara Falls in a Basket.

Alex. Lee and George Frost were boys when General Roebing undertook to build the great suspension bridge across Niagara Falls. This was fifty years ago. The boys lived on the American side of the river, within sight of the falls, and very near the spot upon which the bridge was to be built. There was great interest in the project, for the plan was regarded as one of the most remarkable that had ever been attempted by engineering skill.

The workmen were divided into two parties, one working on the American, the other upon the Canadian side. There was no means of getting across except by taking rowboats, several miles below the falls. The chief engineer under General Roebing took up his residence very near to the homes of these two boys and they were so constantly on hand whenever he went to the river that he could not escape an acquaintance with them.

He was a rather silent man, and they were both surprised, therefore, when he turned to them one day and said: 'Here, boys! Can you fly a kite?'

'Yes, sir,' they responded promptly.

'Can you fly one well?' he continued, looking at them keenly.

'Pretty well, sir,' Alex responded more modestly.

'If you can fly one well,' replied the engineer, 'you will help me to build the suspension bridge.'

Alex's eyes grew big, and so did George's. Help build the suspension bridge!

The engineer saw the effect of his words, and added, 'Come down this afternoon with the best kite you have, and we shall see if you can send it to the Canadian shore. If you can, you will be the lads to carry across the first cable for one of the most remarkable bridges in the world.'

Then, for the first time, the boys saw what he meant. They looked at each other a moment, and then set off for home as fast as their bare feet would carry them.

They said nothing to the family, but betook themselves to the woodshed, where they set to work with a will. Kite-flying had always been one of their greatest sports; and they had made dozens of kites, as season followed season. The frame of one that had been a favorite still hung in the shed. They got it down and covered it with the strongest but lightest paper they could secure. It was nothing but

an ordinary home-made kite, but they felt sure of its flying qualities when it was ready to be taken down to the river.

Upon their arrival the engineer examined the kite, while they looked on with mingled hope and fear. At length he said, taking up a ball of twine, 'Put this on in place of the string you have. It is light but very strong. The wind is in the right direction and blowing well. You ought to succeed.'

They quickly tied on the new cord, and then Alex took the ball, while George went to a short distance with the kite, ready to give it a push. It started well. Then there came a sudden puff of wind, followed by a lull; the kite veered, staggered and came to the ground with a flop. George picked it up quickly. Some of the small boys standing about shouted derisively, but the engineer said, 'Never mind, boys, you are not the only people who have failed the first time. Try again.'

Once more George held the kite as high as he could. Alex got a good start, and in a moment more the kite was sailing away in a steady course toward the river. Alex ran to the bank, then began to pay out his line as evenly as his excitement would permit. It was a glorious sight, and all watched with keen interest as the kite grew smaller and soared steadily.

At last a shout went up from the opposite bank, and every one knew the kite was over the Canadian shore. Unrolling the remainder of the cord upon the ground Alex suddenly let the line slack. The kite wavered, made a wild dive, and dropped.

'Well done, boys,' exclaimed General Roebing as a great cheer arose from both sides of the river. Two prouder boys than George and Alex you can scarcely imagine. 'It is clear sailing now,' added the engineer, as he fastened a heavier cord to the kite string, and then signalled the men on the opposite shore to draw it over. Each successive line was heavier and stronger than the last, and finally a one-inch cable was pulled across the 1,200 feet of space beneath which roared the mighty river.

The cable was made secure by drawing it over a wooden tower on each bank, embedding the ends in the solid rock and fastening them with a key of melted lead. After the cable was laid, the men were instructed to build an immense iron basket which could be drawn from shore to shore over the cable, by means of ropes and a windlass on each bank. This was intended to carry the tools, and even the men themselves, to and fro.

The boys scarcely found time to eat their meals during these days. The afternoon the basket was being finished George was obliged to pile a cord of wood, and Alex volunteered to help him. It was late when they finished, but the next morning found them again at the bridge.

'Now, boys,' said the engineer as he showed the completed basket, 'since you helped us so well with our cable, I think you should be allowed to make the first trip across the river. Would you like to?'

Without stopping to consider, they both exclaimed, 'Yes, indeed!' thinking only of the glory of the feat.

'All right, jump in,' was the response, and the workmen drew the basket close to shore.

If their hearts misgave them nothing could have induced them to show it now. They settled themselves in the basket, which was deep, and large enough to hold both comfortably. Then the signal was given and the men on the farther shore began to turn the windlass. The basket moved slowly forward, and the boys waved their caps to the men.

At first the excitement of the adventure kept their spirits at a high pitch. The basket went forward steadily, but it swayed back and forth below the cable with a motion which was not altogether agreeable. The boys had lived near the falls all their lives and its noise was a familiar sound, but now, for the first time the terrific roar of the water impressed them with its mighty force and power.

George looked off to the falls. Never before had they seemed of such immense height. The view was a new one. Then he looked down. One hundred and sixty feet below him was the roaring, seething mass of water, and he felt suddenly faint and sick. He glanced at the cable; it seemed like a thread, measured by the space beneath, and it was all that held them over that awful chasm. He could hear the water churn and surge below him, but he dared not look down again. Alex was as white as a ghost. George glanced ahead at the farther shore; they had not gone one-third of the distance, and it was 1,200 feet from shore to shore. The distance was appalling. He grew dizzy again and curled down in the bottom of the basket. It seemed hours that he lay there. At last he looked up; the sky seemed nearer than the water, and so he kept his eyes on the floating clouds. Gradually he began to feel better.

'Alex,' he said, 'we must brace up. We are nearly to shore and we don't want to show the white feather. Keep your eyes on the sky, but sit up.'

Alex did as he suggested, and when they finally neared the shore they were able to respond to the cheers and greetings of the men. But the joy of landing was completely swallowed up by the thought of the return trip. Still, there was no alternative, and pride made them try to hide their feelings from the men.

After a rest of about ten minutes the workmen made ready to start the basket back. The boys stepped in, setting their teeth hard, and shouting a farewell which stuck in their throats.

The basket swung off again, but though the motion was as unpleasant as ever, and the roar of the water was as great, they had learned to look skyward, and the giddiness was not so great. At last they heard voices from the shore, and bracing themselves they looked forward. They were so near that they could see among the throng on the bank the white faces of George's father and mother, looking stern and anxious. But so limp and white did the boys look, as they stepped ashore, that it was thought they had been punished enough.

The crowd of boys shouted and cheered; and for weeks after they never tired of having Alex and George tell of their wonderful trip.

## A Timely Warning.

While a British brig was gliding smoothly along before a good breeze in the South Pacific, three months ago, a flock of small birds about the size, shape and color of paroquets settled down in the rigging and passed an hour or more resting. The second mate was so anxious to find out the species to which the visiting strangers belonged that he tried to entrap a specimen, but the birds were too shy to be thus caught, and too spry to be seized by the quick hands of the sailors. At the end of about an hour the birds took the brig's course, and disappeared, but towards nightfall they came back and passed the night in the main-top. The next morning the birds flew off once again, and when they returned at noon the sailors scattered some food about the decks. By this time the birds had become so tame that they hopped about the decks picking up