

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Winning of the Fogartys.

(Caroline K. Herrick, in the 'Wellspring.')

'Would not you enjoy studying the lessons at home, although you cannot attend Sunday-school?' asked the Home-department visitor.

'I ain't got time,' replied Mrs. Witcher. 'I have to work day in and day out.'

'All you have to promise is to study half an hour a week. You might divide that into portions of five minutes a day, if you prefer. Don't you think you could do that much?'

'No, I haven't time to do any more than I'm doing now,' replied the overworked washerwoman.

'Wouldn't you like to try it, mother? I'd read the lesson to you,' said the lame girl who sat all day in her chair by the window.

'No, Rhody; I can't do it, I tell you. I haven't the time,' her mother persisted.

'Would not you like to be a member of the Home Department?' asked the lady, turning to the young invalid.

'Oh, might I?' exclaimed Rhoda, with shining eyes. 'It would be almost like going to Sunday-school!'

Thus lame Rhoda was enrolled as a member of the Home Department and received a lesson help. 'I'll read it to mother, anyway,' she said; 'perhaps she'll remember some.'

But this part of her plan proved a disappointment. If she tried to read a verse while her mother cleared away the breakfast things, before going to her work, Mrs. Witcher was sure to think of something that must be said at once about the dinner, or would go out of the room right in the middle of the verse. At night it was no better. When the supper dishes were put away Mrs. Witcher folded her busy hands, having no mending to do, since Rhoda filled her solitary hours with that work, and before the daughter had read two verses of the lesson, the tired mother was nodding in her chair.

Even on Sundays her mother seemed always too busy or too sleepy to listen, and Rhoda had to give up the attempt to interest her in the study that was daily becoming more absorbing to herself.

The Fogartys lived upstairs. All day long on Sundays four pairs of heavy young feet were pounding overhead or clattering up and down the stairs.

'I wish some one would persuade those Fogarty children to go to Sunday-school,' said Mrs. Witcher one warm Sunday afternoon when the door stood open to the stairway, for the sake of coolness. Mrs. Witcher's remark was prompted less by a desire for the betterment of the Fogartys than by the longing for an hour of the quiet that was rarer on Sundays than on other days of the week.

'Perhaps they would go if they were asked,' said Rhoda, and called the whole noisy tribe in the next time they passed the door. There were the elder boy and girl, known respectively as Dolly and Robby, names that were somewhat misleading as to the sex of their bearers since 'Dolly' was short for Adolphus and 'Robby' for Roberta. Then there were the twins Andrew and Amanda, familiarly known as 'Andy' and 'Mandy'. Rhoda suggested that they would like to go to Sunday-school. Mandy was the first to speak:—

'I'll go, if Robby will.'

'I can't go,' said Robby. 'I ain't got no good clothes.'

'I won't go, 'less Dolly does,' said Andy, al-

ways ambitious of imitating the elder brother, who had arrived at the dignity and the experience of eleven years.

'Naw; I won't go,' protested Dolly, surlily. 'They'd make me set wid kids.' Dolly had once been induced to go to Sunday-school and—being graded according to his acquirements—had been placed in a class with boys two years younger than he. His classmates had never seen him again.

'I'd be glad enough to sit anywhere, if I could only get there,' said Rhoda. 'I used to go when I was little—before I hurt my back; and wasn't it lovely!' The picture had now grown all the brighter in her memory because the intervening years had brought her so little variety or enjoyment. 'The singing is so beautiful,' she went on, and there were pictures of the things we studied about. Sometimes the pictures were made up on a blackboard. There wasn't much on the blackboard when the teacher began, but she put things on as she went along with them in the story'—

'How'd she put 'em on?' interrupted Robby. 'Stuck 'em on with pins,' replied Rhoda. 'She'd say, "What do I want to put in the picture next?" and we'd say, "A man," or "A horse," or'—

'Did you ever call fer elephants?' inquired Andy, who had lately seen a circus parade.

'We never had elephants, but we had camels sometimes,' said Rhoda.

'I'd ha' hollered for camels, every time,' said Dolly, attracted by this novel feature of Sunday-school work.

'You couldn't have 'em in the picture if they weren't in the story,' Rhoda explained. 'You had to know the story before you could tell what to put in the picture.'

Andy's enthusiasm was somewhat cooled by this information, but on the whole Sunday-school had gained interest in his eyes and he wanted to hear more about it.

'Perhaps I can show you, instead of just telling you,' said Rhoda. 'Would you like me to have Sunday-school for you next Sunday afternoon?'

Mandy looked doubtfully at Robby, and Andy studied the face of his elder brother; both wished very much to accept the invitation, but dared not act independently of their leaders. Dolly plunged his hands deep in his pocket, looked out of the window, whistled, then said:—

'If it would be fun fer you, I don't care if we do.'

So Rhoda's Sunday-school was started. It would have shocked a graduate of a normal class, but it was full of interest to the young teacher and far from profitless to her pupils. With the text of the lesson and explanatory notes in her lesson help and the treasured memories of her Sunday-school experiences of five years ago, Rhoda managed not merely to fix the attention of her ill-assorted class, but to familiarize them with many of the stories of the Old and New Testaments. She taught them the Lord's Prayer—kept fresh in her memory by daily repetition, and fragments of hymns that she had been used to sing over and over to herself during her long, lonely days. There was not much system in it, but it bore practical results. She was, at least, giving pleasure and keeping the Fogartys quiet and greatly enjoying the consciousness of being helpful.

One Sunday, as her class assembled, Rhoda was impressed with a certain air of mystery in the glances they exchanged, and observed that their attention was not fixed as usual, upon her, but that the younger three looked

at Dolly, with significant smiles and no encouragement. Her heart sank with a fear that, weary of long-sustained good behavior, they were planning mischief. What should she do with them if they became unruly? She waited anxiously for Dolly to speak, which, after much fidgeting, he did.

'Say, Rhody, we thinks you're awful good to us,' the twins nodded emphatic assent, 'an' it's only the square thing fer we to do suthin' fer you. Give an' take, ye know. So—we've been a-thinkin'—that'—he broke off suddenly, carried off his feet by the stream of his oratory. 'Could ye git downstairs?' he asked.

'We want to take ye fer a ride, Rhody,' Robby explained.

'In Dolly's express waggon,' cried the twins in chorus.

'Twould be all right, if ye could once git downstairs,' Dolly went on. 'I'd set a chair in the waggon and back it up alongside the front steps, an' ye could jest slide off'n the steps onto the chair. Robby's tried it.'

'But the getting downstairs,' said Rhoda.

'Couldn't ye sit downstairs, this way,' suggested Robby. Running upstairs, she worked her way down, sliding from step to step with a vigor that made Rhoda feel as if her breath was being jolted out by the rapid bumps. The method seemed feasible, though susceptible of improvement in the manner of its execution.

'I believe I could do that,' she answered, hopefully.

'Then we'll take ye,' said Dolly. 'When will ye go?'

Saturday was the time decided upon, and all through the week Rhoda thought of it by day and dreamed of it by night. To breathe the outer air! To see the next street! She who had not crossed the threshold in five years!

On Thursday the Home Department visitor called.

'Next Sunday is our graduating Sunday,' she said. 'The Home Department members are invited to all those special services. I'm so sorry you cannot come to this. You would enjoy it.'

For a long time after her visitor had gone Rhoda sat thinking. Rousing herself at last, she said:—

'Perhaps I might succeed. At any rate, I will try.'

Saturday morning proved to be as fine a morning as could be desired. Rhoda—who had practiced 'sitting downstairs,' made the descent to the front door without accident, slid into the chair that Dolly had placed in the waggon, and, drawn by Dolly and Robby and escorted in the rear by the twins, traversed the too-familiar block and turned the corner into the unknown world of the next street.

'Where would ye like to go, Rhody?' Dolly asked.

'Could you pull me as far as the church corner?' she asked, anxiously.

'Sure. That isn't any ways,' said Robby. 'If it's a little hard on the hill, the twins can push behind!'

'How nice it all is!' she exclaimed, when they had reached the church corner. 'Oh, how the vines have grown! And that's the window I used to love to look at, with the picture of Elijah and the ravens.'

'Where's the ravens?' demanded Andy. 'I can't see 'em.'

'No you can't see them unless you're inside the church,' said Rhoda. 'You can't tell what a lovely picture it is until you see it with