

Our Young Folks.

"ONLY A GIRL."

BY N. I. M.

"I wish—I wish—" Patty Breynard shut her book, and sprang out of her chair, and her face all in a glow.

"Well?" said Mrs. Breynard, smiling. The family were accustomed to sudden demonstrations from Patty.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed she, running her words together in a breathless fashion, "I wish I had lived at the time of the Crusades! I have just been reading how people made up quarrels, and sold their lands, and went out in a body to drive the Turks from the Holy Lands, and Godfrey of Bouillon refused to be made the king. I should like to have been as noble as that."

"Dear me," put in Dick from the sofa, "what on earth could you have done? Women couldn't go anywhere. You are nothing but a girl, you know."

A cloud came over Patty's face. To be a girl seemed in Dick's eyes the crowning misfortune of life, and he delighted in expressing his sentiments to Patty, taking her down when she had a fit of the "high strikes," as he called it.

But in a moment a bright expression succeeded.

"That's just all you know about it, Dick Breynard," she said. "You had better read your history again. Women did go, some of them dressed as pages, and they wore the badge too—a red cross on their left shoulder—and—"

"The crusades had many other features besides those you describe," interrupted her mother, "What good they accomplished was far apart from their original object, and there was the ruin of many a land and home. When you are older you will understand about it better. But, Patty, I have an errand for you to do this afternoon. Will a long walk tire you?"

"No, indeed!" Patty looked down at her sturdy limbs as though the mere idea were an insult.

"Papa said he should stay at the factory late to-night; there is some work he wished to look after himself. Now a letter has come from Aunt Martha, saying that she will be at Hunter's Station this evening, and I am sure he will wish to meet her. Will you take the letter down to him before tea?"

Patty started for her hat and sash. "Before you go," called out Dick, "just hand me that book you were reading, will you? and give my pillow a shake. Girls are—well, worth a little something about such things, you know," looking at her mischievously.

Patty obeyed, stopping to give his head several loving little strokes. Dick was a great tease, but just now he was suffering from a sprained ankle. He could not go out into the sunshine, nor drink in the fresh summer breeze, nor have any fun. Patty did not see how he bore it at all. So she re-arranged his pillows, drew back the curtains, that he might see better, and then once more bounded off.

In two minutes her bright face reappeared in the doorway. "Mamma," she said, "Harry and Bessie both want to go with me. May they?"

Mrs. Breynard glanced at the clock. "It is pretty late," she said, "and rather a long walk for them." Then, seeing Patty's look of disappointment, "But perhaps you might take them as far as the bridge, and let them play near the boat-house until you come back. Only, Patty," she called out, going to the door, for at the first signal of consent the little girl had dashed from the room, "be very careful. Tell them they must not go on the bridge."

But Patty was already half-way down the garden path. "All right mamma," she cried, gayly, waving back her hand.

Mrs. Breynard returned to her work. "There can't be any danger," she said, musingly. "Harry and Bessie are always so obedient."

Mr. Breynard's house was situated half a mile from a small fresh-water lake, one of a series connected by a deep flowing stream. A lane back of the house led to this stream, which was crossed by a narrow bridge at the point just above where it widened into the lake. At the head of the lake, on the opposite side, was a large paper manufactory, which was under his superintendence, and was where Patty's errand led her now. The children delighted in this place. Dick owned a boat, which he kept moored close by, and when he was well entertained them many an afternoon by rowing them over its smooth glassy waters.

They chatted joyfully on their way, running races and chasing butterflies. It did not take them long to reach the boat-house. Then a sudden thought struck Harry.

"Patty," he said, "can't you give us a little row?"

Patty looked doubtful. "I am not sure mamma would wish it. She might not like me to take you out all alone."

"She won't care," said Bessie, coaxingly. "You row as well as Dick, and it so long since we had a sail. Do take us just a little ways—as far as the water-lilies out there!"

The cool, clear sheet of water looked very tempting after the walk.

"I haven't the key, and can't get the oars out of the boat house," Patty said, putting her hand instinctively into her pocket. Yes, there it was. She had forgotten to put it away in its place when she had used the boat the day before. "Well," she continued, just long enough to gather a few water-lilies to put in Aunt Martha's room, and then you must be satisfied to wait till I come back."

How lovely the water was, the air so fresh, the sky so blue, with an array of clouds sailing like stately ships over its quiet surface! It scarcely seemed to the children that they had been out ten minutes, when the sun, traveling fast behind the mists, announced Patty that she had lost considerable time.

"I will not stop to look up now," she said, as she drew the boat under some trees. "You, Harry and Bessie stay here and watch it until I come back."

Once fairly off, she soon arrived at her father's office. But here a fresh delay awaited her. Mr. Breynard was very busy talking with a gentleman, a member of the firm, and could not attend to Patty for some time. At last he heard her message, and read the letter.

"I cannot possibly be home," he said, "before eight o'clock, but there will be time enough to meet Aunt Martha then. The train does not get in until after nine. Tell mamma, Patty, to have Dobbin harnessed, and do not delay the supper."

Patty's journey homeward was little more deliberate. While waiting at her father's office it had dawned upon her memory like a flash that her mother had forbidden her only the week before to take the children out alone in the boat.

"You must wait until Dick is well," Patty, she had said, "unless papa or I go with you. Harry and Bessie are too little yet to be trusted on the water without any one to look after them, and you can not possibly manage them and the boat too. So for the present you must do your sailing alone."

Patty's conscience pricked her sorely as she walked slowly along, with the consciousness of having betrayed her mother's confidence. She had been trusted against her mother's better judgment too. She knew that, for she had seen the hesitation in Mrs. Breynard's face when she gave her consent. To be sure, she had forgotten, but mamma would say that was no excuse. Was not a girl thirteen years of age old enough to think?

The consequences of a careless act are sometimes as dreadful as those where the offender is more guilty. Patty remembered the terrible railroad accident that had occurred a few months before, because the engineer had not said that the brakes were out of order, and shut-

tered. "Well," she thought, "I will remember next time. Anyway, nothing has happened to them; I am thankful for that." How could she be so sure? She had left the children at the water's edge with the boat. Suppose it should enter their minds to get into it, and they should float away by themselves! The little girl's walk turned into a run as she neared the bridge.

Yes, there they were, quietly sitting by the boat, and perfectly safe, Harry waving his hat as he saw her in the distance, Bessie crying out with pleasure as she sprang forward to meet her, dragging an oar in her hand.

"Be careful, Bessie; don't run!" shouted Patty from the opposite shore. "Wait on the bank for me."

But the warning came too late; the child was already on the bridge, and even as Patty spoke, her foot entangled in the oar, she tripped, fell against the light railing, and, crash!

Patty's heart gave one leap, and stood perfectly still, as she waited to hear the splash in the waters below.

But it did not come; only a cry of childish terror resounded through the air. How she ever reached the bridge, how she ever had the strength to cross it, Patty never knew; but in an instant she was on the spot, and then she saw what so far had saved Bessie's life. In the fall her sash had caught, and partially wound itself round a hook projecting from a board which sustained the bridge below. The child hung suspended in the air, supported only by a rusty nail, which even now was giving way under her weight. Patty leaned forward, trying to grasp the child, but she was just beyond her reach. The thought went through her mind like the lightning's flash: "It would do no good anyway. She is too heavy. I could not lift her." Then she called out calmly, though her heart beat so loudly she scarcely heard her own words:

"Be perfectly quiet; oh, Bessie, do not struggle, or you will surely fall! I will get you in a moment, dear; only do just as I tell you."

The little girl did not speak, and instantly, quicker than she could think, Patty was in the boat. Would she ever reach her? It seemed to Patty that she could fairly hear the creaking of the nail against the decayed wood as it wrenched itself from its place; then, with all her strength, she added stroke to stroke, and the little boat shot down the current.

On, on, with the consciousness that the knot in Bessie's sash was loosening, that she was slipping nearer and nearer to the water. In a moment it would all be over. One prayer, one superhuman effort, a shout of triumph from Harry on the shore. Patty reached the bridge, steadied herself in the boat, and received the child into her arms just as the hook gave way and fell with a splash into the water.

What a long walk it was home, and how terribly tired Patty felt with the reaction after all the strain and excitement! Scarcely a word was said. Bessie clung tightly to Patty's hand, while Harry kept close to his little sister's side, thinking how dreadful it would have been if, instead of walking by them they had had to carry her little form, rescued, cold and white, from these terrible waters.

Three shrinking little figures, three white little faces, met Mrs. Breynard's gaze as she stood on the door-step straining her eyes out into the evening gloom.

"I disobeyed you, mamma," sobbed Patty, "and almost killed Bessie." Then everything about grew very black, and the stars just peeping out in the evening sky seemed to come down from their places and flash all about Patty in the darkness. When she came to herself again she was lying on the sitting-room sofa, Mrs. Breynard rubbing her hands with cologne, and Dick on his crutches standing by the end, gazing wistfully into her face.

It took a long time to tell the story. Papa had arrived, and if the train had not

fortunately been late, Aunt Martha would have found herself quite forgotten. Once herself again, however, Patty told it simply and bravely, taking all the blame and quite unconscious that in the eyes of the family she was little less than a heroine. Mrs. Breynard held Bessie in her lap, but her hand grasped Patty's very tight as she heard of her darling's danger, and in Dick's eyes there arose a very suspicious moisture.

"Catch me talking about girls again," he said. "You did have presence of mind. Why, Patty, I should have been proud to have you for a page if I had been a Crusader. What did you think when you were rowing so fast?"

"That it was all my fault," gasped Patty. "Don't praise me Dick. If I had only remembered and minded mamma the oars would have been safe in the boat-house, and the whole thing would never have happened."

"I don't know about that," said Dick, reflectively, going over toward the window to look out, as if he might there gain some fresh information on the subject.

There was no answer, presently a little heavier breathing and when Dick turned again, Patty worn out by the day's exertions had fallen fast asleep on the sofa.

As soon as he could hobble comfortably about on his crutches, Dick had a mysterious errand into town, and a few days later Patty was surprised by receiving from him a neat little package. Inside, reposing in a tiny velvet case, lay a bright silver pin, on which was engraved a boat crossed with a pair of oars, and underneath the words *Dux femina facti*. ("A woman was leader in the deed.")

By what process of reasoning the classical Dick had associated Bessie's rescue with the feats of the immortal Dido, Patty did not stop to inquire, but the gift, "her honor badge," Dick called it, gave her a great deal of happiness. Not only did she value it for its beauty and what it recalled, but because she felt it sealed the promise made tacitly on that night, which they would none of them ever forget, that never again, either in earnest or in play, would Dick taunt her with being "Only a Girl."

Seal Fishing in Alaska.

The seal fisheries in the Northwestern part of Alaska are controlled by the Alaska Commercial Company. The contract stipulates that not more than 100,000 seals a year shall be killed, for which the company pays the Territory an annual fee of \$55,000, besides \$2 for each skin shipped from the Territory, and 50 cents a gallon for seal oil, also, that the company shall annually furnish free to the inhabitants 25,000 dried salmon, sixty cords of firewood, a sufficient quantity of salt, and to maintain such public schools as are needed. All others are prohibited from killing in Alaska any otter, mink, marten, sable or fur seal. Every summer trading schooners, as they are styled, go out with the avowed purpose of meeting the whaling fleet, and bringing in the sperm oil. They return with large barrels, which are entered at the Unalaska Custom House as oil, and are immediately sent to San Francisco. The captain of the man of war stationed at Sitka, speaking of the matter, says: "I would just like to overhaul one or two of these vessels and find out whether the oil contained in those barrels runs out or spreads out flat, and has hair on one side."

Respectable Bostonian—I wish a livery coat for my coachman this summer. Sewell Tailor—Where are you staying, sir? R. B.—At Nahant. S. T.—John, bring out that bundle of linen dusters!

In a rock that is washed by the sea at Boulogne, a grotto from eight to ten meters high has been discovered. Human bones have been found in it, as well as ancient earthenware marked with alchemical figures, and coins which are believed to have been struck by the early Gauls.