

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## My Beautiful Secret.

I have learned a beautiful secret,  
I know not how or where;  
But I know it is sweet and precious,  
And true, and glad, and fair;  
And that God in heaven reveals it  
To all that have ears to hear.

And I know that ere I learned it  
My way was weary and hard;  
And somewhere in life's music,  
There was always that which jarred,  
A hidden and dreary discord  
That all its sweetness marred.

But my Harp of Life was lifted  
By One who knew the range  
Of its many strings—for he 'made' it—  
And He struck a keynote strange;  
And beneath the touch of the Master  
I heard the music change.

No longer it failed and faltered,  
No longer sobbed and strove;  
But it seemed to soar and mingle  
With the song of heaven above;  
For the pierced hands of the Master  
Had struck the keynote—Love.

Thy heart's long-prisoned music  
Let the Master's Hand set free!  
Let Him whisper His beautiful secret  
To 'thee'—as He hath to me!  
'My Love is the golden keynote  
Of all my will for Thee.'  
—Edith Gilling Cherry, in the 'Christian.'

## Two Birthdays.

'Do you want some walks swept, or leaves raked, or kindling chopped?' asked a cheery young voice outside Mrs. Grey's open door.

'Why, Jamie Lyle, is that you?' Mrs. Grey brought her sewing to the porch and sat down on the steps. 'Yes, the lawns need raking. And so you have gone into business?'

'Yes'm; I want to earn some money for Laurie's birthday.'

'Your baby brother? I thought his birthday came last month.'

'Yes'm, but things went very crooked then.' Jamie studied the toes of his tan shoes for a minute, and then looked up with a sudden burst of confidence. 'I s'pose I've been pretty selfish a good while, but I didn't know it till baby's birthday—honest, Mis' Grey, I didn't. He was two years old last month, and of course father and mother gave him things, and I meant to buy him a present, too. I thought I'd get him a rubber ball and a little red tin pail, so I went to Mr. Denton's first. While I sat on the counter looking at things, I saw the nicest knife—four blades and a gimlet.

I wanted it the first minute, and the longer I looked the more I wanted it. I had money enough to do it if I didn't buy anything for baby, so at last I took it. I thought I'd call it buying it for Laurie, but I could use it just the same. Well, when I showed it to mother she said it was "a very nice knif," but there was a little look on her face that made me feel queer inside. She said baby was too little to use it, for he'd cry to have it opened, and cut himself if it was open.

'Yes'm, but I thought he'd like it when he gets big enough,' I told her. 'It's just the thing for a boy like me to use.'

'She and father looked at each other, and then she said, "Well, that will be a long time

to wait, so I must wrap it up in tissue paper and lay it away in my drawer where it will keep bright. It's Laurie's present, so it wouldn't be right to let any one use it or spoil it before he gets it.'

'Wasn't I disappointed! But I couldn't say anything, and the knife was laid away, and father and mother didn't say another word about it. This week my birthday came. Did you know I was eight years old, Mis' Grey? I hoped father would buy me a bicycle, but I didn't know, and what do you think he did that morning? He came into the room rolling a great big wheel, and said he had bought it for my birthday.

'Well, I can't ride that one,' I told him, and I felt most ready to cry.

'No, not yet,' he said as cool as you please, "but you'll grow up some day. It's just right for me to ride now."

'He and mother smiled at each other over my head. I knew they did. I thought if they were going to do that miserable old present business all over again, he should have it just the way I did. So I said, "It's a very nice wheel, but it's a good while to wait. I think. I will do it up, though, and lock it up in my room, so it'll keep new, 'cause it's for me, and 'twouldn't be fair for somebody else to spoil it while I'm growing up."

'How he and mother did laugh! The lump sort of went out of my throat then so I could laugh, too, and father said, "Well, that is turning the tables, isn't it, Jamie?'

'Then he brought in another wheel, just right for me—he'd bought himself a new one too—and we had a splendid ride together. I guess he thought I didn't need any preachin' to and I didn't. It's the meanest kind of selfishness to do selfish things, and then try to cheat folks by pretendin' you did 'em because you're so generous. So I want to earn some money, and I'm going to buy baby something for his two-year-old birthday, and not for my eight-year-old one.'

Mrs. Grey laughed heartily. 'Well, Jamie,' she said, 'I've got quite a lot of kindling to be cut, and you shall have it all to do. And I guess it would be a good thing for us all to learn the same lesson you've been learned about giving.'—Selected.

## The Discontented Clam.

At the ebb of tide, on the shore of a pretty cove, bitten out of the mainland by the voracious teeth of old Atlantic during a succession of his crazy fits, there could be seen a large colony of clams. For years they had enjoyed freedom from the approach of greedy man. The only enemies they knew were the fishes and creeping things of the sea, and the fish-hawks and crows of the land; these latter came regularly to the shore, when the tide was out, the crows with much bowing and scraping and wise discussion of the philosophy of things, and the fish-hawk with stately tread, secretly watching for the unwary clam to leave his head sticking out of his shell.

In this colony was one very large clam, whose big head often tempted the appetite of these wily birds, who gloated over the fat morsel they knew to be encased in the hard shells.

Now, it happened that this old clam had often bewailed his sad lot to be confined to this limited place; but his one and only great and clumsy and gouty foot would not allow him to travel far from the place of his birth. His discontent was not lessened when the flood tides covering him brought a great

variety of fishes, crabs, and lobsters to his neighborhood, for in every case his head, though covered with a dark skin, which held in its wrinkles the loose sand, made it difficult to tell it from dirt and stones about it had come to be the one savory morsel which these creatures wished to get hold of, and when the ebb tide came, both fish-hawk and crow stalked forth with the hope of catching the unhappy clam off his guard.

Indeed, the crafty clam had on several occasions seized him by the neck, and, bracing his legs against the sand, tugged hard to pull him out of his house, only to be defeated and left with an appetite the fiercer from the taste of the well seasoned juice which the clam had stored in his pantry.

But in spite of the fact that the tides, in their ebb and flow, brought to him an abundance of food, and twice in every twenty-four hours a change of surrounding—now the deep waters, then the clear air, sometimes filled with sunlight, sometimes with starlight—and notwithstanding there was always something doing in his neighborhood, he grew more and more discontented with his lot.

In vain the hermit crab, attracted by the groanings of this old and morose philosopher, tried to convince him that his lot was vastly better than the lot of some others. 'Look at me!' said the hermit crab. 'Nature never gave to me any sort of a house to live in. She forgot to protect me. I must begin my life looking for a castaway and unoccupied tenement, some old house from which I must back in stealth, and out of which I must go in search of another as soon as I grow a little larger. You have, however, a house that grows with your growth, which opens and shuts on a famous hinge. You have a strong foot that burrows for you a deep hole, into which, shell and all, you can sink. You can, as effectively as man himself, excluding the air from the chamber, add to your own natural strength that of the atmospheric pressure, while I am ever the creature of the currents of the sea, and the prey of every vagabond fish. Cheer up, Mr. Clam; there are other fellows worse off than you are.'

But the old clam grew more and more morose. One day, when the tide was out, a cunning old fish hawk from his flight landed beside the clam, and, before the clam was aware of his presence, took note of his groans and complaints. 'I am in bad luck,' cried the clam. 'I can't go anywhere; I must stay right here all the time, in the same old place. If I put my foot out and pull myself along, it is for so short a distance that it hardly pays to make the effort. Here are these creatures—fishes, and crabs and lobsters, and even snails—that come and camp right in my doorway, and watch a chance to get a taste of me; they can go anywhere; here are all these birds that fly, hither and thither, even into the great world above. I wish that I could swim away like the fishes, or fly away like the birds!'

'What is that I am hearing you saying?' said the fish hawk. 'Want to swim? want to fly? Why, that is easy enough, if you will only take some lessons in it. I could not fly at first, but some one pushed me out into the great world above me and beneath me, and I found that it was easy enough.'

'I wish that some one would teach me!' said the clam.'

'Since I learned I have given many a lesson to others,' said the crafty fish hawk; indeed that is my chief business; from it I ob-