

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## A Boy's Visit to Washington Irving.

(Bishop Mallalieu, in the 'Presbyterian Banner'.)

In 1857 I was a senior in Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn. We had two weeks' vacation the last week of April and the first of May. From my earliest boyhood I had been greatly interested in the history of the Revolutionary War. This was partly because I loved to read histories, and partly because my great-grandfather, who was a member of the Fifth Connecticut Regiment, died in the service, after passing through the dreary winter at Valley Forge. Having other relatives who had campaigned in the Hudson River country, and had fought at White Plains and other places in that section, I concluded to spend my spring vacation in exploring the regions on both sides of the Hudson, from the Battery in New York City to the Catskill Mountain House.

This trip, of course, took me through Tarrytown, which has been for these many years, as it was then, famous as the residence of Washington Irving, a man whose writings have been to millions a source of culture and pure literary enjoyment, and are well worth the reading by all persons of good literary taste.

There are many points of great interest in and about Tarrytown connected with the Revolutionary War, and especially connected with Irving's writings. The old bridge, as famous as the Brig o' Doon; the old stone church, and the contiguous graveyard; the quiet but sequestered valley, known as Sleepy Hollow—all of them made interesting as related to Irving's famous character, Ichabod Crane. But more than I wanted to see these localities, made interesting by Irving's imagination, was the desire to see Irving himself. So, without any note of introduction, I proposed to myself to make him an informal call.

Irving lived about two miles south of the village. Tarrytown was only a village, so many years ago. About 9 o'clock I set out on my undertaking. The trees, apples especially, were in full bloom. All the foliage was fresh and luxuriant. The birds were singing. The sun was shining. In fact, all nature was in a joyful mood. The walk was a perfect delight and never to be forgotten.

As I turned off the main street an open barouche passed me, containing an elderly gentleman and the driver. I supposed the gentleman to be a well-to-do person, something past seventy years of age, who had been out for a morning drive, for he did not look like a person who was in active business. In a very few minutes I reached the house I was seeking. It was a lovely two-story stone cottage with several gables, and quite ornate in its style of architecture. A broad stone doorstep, scarcely elevated above the surrounding lawn, was in front of the main entrance. The door sill was not more than six or eight inches above the stone doorstep, so that when I approached the door, which was swung partly open, I saw the identical gentleman crossing the hall from the room to the left and going towards a room, directly opposite, to the right. Before seeing him I was about to ring the door bell. I hesitated a little, and the gentleman, observing me, stopped, and came toward the door. I simply said, without waiting for him to inquire as to my business:

'Have I the honor of addressing Washington Irving?'

He replied, 'Yes.'

I immediately said, 'Mr. Irving, I am a student in my senior year in Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn. As far distant as that is, we have often heard of you, and have read many of your writings. I was visiting points of interest along the Hudson, and I could not deny myself the pleasure of calling on you.'

I commenced to tell him that I had no note of introduction, when he interrupted me by swinging the door far back, and in the most cheery tone, said: 'You have no need of an introduction; you have attended to that yourself. Come in, come in,' he repeated in the most pleasant way. Accepting the invitation, he led me to his library.

There was little furniture in the room, but

the walls were nearly covered with books. A few pictures were hung in vacant places, and I noticed a most excellent portrait of Walter Scott. The windows opened to the south. Irving took his seat back of his desk, with his face toward the windows, while I sat ten feet away from him with my back to the windows. This arrangement gave me the best possible opportunity of seeing his face during the whole interview. He was not a large man, perhaps five feet and eight inches high, might weigh 170, was rotund, with small hands and feet, a smoothly shaven face, kindly eyes, a florid complexion, a well-proportioned nose, a generous mouth, and plenty of gray hair. Would I had his photograph as I saw him that morning!

At first he asked questions about myself and my birthplace. He talked about the university and the professors. Then he told me several interesting stories about Yankees and Yankee schoolmasters; about the Yankee custom of putting up guide-posts at all country cross-roads. Finally, he drifted away into a most interesting talk about the scenes in the immediate neighborhood that he had idealized in his various local writings. For more than an hour and a half one of the most interesting of all talkers was listened to by one of the most interested listeners this world ever saw brought together. If I had been the son of Irving's best friend he could not have treated me with more cordial politeness, nor entertained me more profitably or delightfully.

For all these years this hour and a half spent with Irving has been counted on as one of the most enjoyable seasons of all my life. It is a wonderful inspiration for a young man to come in touch, though only for a little while, with such a man as Irving. It expands the heavens above him, and broadens his horizon in all directions. The next best thing to it is to read the writings of Irving and such other men and women as have enriched our literary resources.

When I was about to leave, Irving came out of the house, and showed me a shorter way back than the one I had come—a sort of cross-lots walk, which was a favorite of his. And so, with good wishes and kindly farewells that, falling from his lips, were a real benediction, we parted. It was my first and last meeting with the famous American, as he passed from earth a little more than two years afterwards.

## Tim Hammond's Promotion.

(The 'Boys' Sword'.)

The 'Sunset Special' was five minutes overdue.

'Any word yet?' asked a tall, dignified-looking individual, impatiently pacing up and down the narrow platform at Rangeley.

'Yes, sir; two hours, ten minutes late, blocked by a freight wreck at Cedar River, eleven miles this side of Shirley.' And James Ellis, station agent at Rangeley, hurried back to his instrument, for his practiced ear had caught his 'call.'

'Interesting condition of things!' exclaimed the president of the Great Overland Eastern, irritably. 'That means a run to Hamilton in an ordinary coach!' And Alexander D. C. Van Pelt, head official of the great trunk line, started ill-humoredly towards the train on the siding, that had been waiting to attach the 'Elmore,' the president's private car, on its arrival, with the 'Sunset Special.'

'Carelessness; probably nothing else in the world! It's the cause of half the railway accidents, were the truth but known—a result of incompetent men.'

The president's attention was at that moment attracted to Tim Hammond, who had just set the switch for a long through freight. 'Too young for a position like that; can't be over fifteen! I fail to see what anyone could be thinking of, appointing a mere boy to such a responsible place;' and the man made a hurried entry in his memorandum. 'Another cause of accidents—inexperience;' and the determined expression on the official's face was sufficient proof that before the end of another week, Tim Hammond would be without a job—his position would be filled by another.

'All aboard!'

It was impossible to hold the train longer,

however much the president of the line was to be inconvenienced. It must reach Hamilton on schedule time or the passengers aboard would miss connections for points East—and already eleven minutes were lost.

Slowly the heavy train pulled on to the main track, and, after the last car had rolled by, Tim Hammond went whistling back to the station.

'He wasn't feeling what you might call pleased over that freight accident,' James Ellis stood in the office door as Tim came up the platform.

'He—who?' Tim stopped whistling.

'Why didn't you see? The tall fellow in the black coat—he with the gray beard?'

'I saw him; remember his looking at me, but I didn't know who he was. Anyone special?'

'Only Alexander D. C. Van Pelt, president of the road,' imparted the station agent, dryly.

'Whew! Ought to have taken another look at him. I don't see, though, why the wreck at Cedar River need bother him very much. Number Nine wasn't delayed only about ten minutes.'

'He was expecting his private car to attach to the special, and Number Nine was going to take it on to Hamilton from here. But then,' continued Ellis, 'it isn't really so annoying for him as it is for the passengers who were delayed by the accident. 'Twon't do a railway president, to my way of thinking, any great amount of harm to ride as ordinary folks do, once in his life. But he didn't take it with any too much good humor.'

A click! click, and the station agent went back to his post.

As the president of the road had intimated, Tim Hammond was young; he hadn't reached his sixteenth birthday. While his father was laid off with a crushed hand, caused when coupling cars, Tim had substituted for him; and, after Howard Hammond's death, due to blood poison resulting from the wound, his son had received the permanent appointment.

'It's due him,' wrote the agent to headquarters. 'He's strong, quick and reliable; you will make no mistake in giving him the place.'

And now, for nearly a year, Tim had supported the family, doing his father's work acceptably, young as he was.

'He's one of the best hands I ever worked with,' more than once mentally commented Ellis; 'and such a youngster, too; but he's got it in him. I predict he won't always be second hand at a small station like Rangeley. One can 'most generally tell whether a fellow's going to amount to anything or not by the way he takes hold at the start. If he's got it in him he's going to show it, however low down he begins—leastways that's been my experience.'

The following Tuesday James Ellis threw down his pen on the desk, an expression of puzzled inquiry on his sunburnt face.

'I—I don't understand—discharged!' And he again unfolded the officially stamped paper that he held in his hands. 'No cause of complaint that I know of and another man appointed in his place—will be here on Friday. "Inexperienced!" He's done everything required—never seen a more capable hand.'

The station agent was visibly agitated when Tim appeared at the office door.

'I've got bad news for you; here, you may read it.'

'Discharged! Why, what have I—'

'Done nothing, save attend strictly to your work,' interrupted Ellis, looking up. 'They say you're too young; it's a fault you'll get over in time, my boy.'

'I wonder they didn't think of that when father—' There was something strangely like a lump in the boy's throat. 'I'm older'n I was then.'

'I know; it's an outrage!' And Ellis threw down the notice indignantly.

For the next two days Tim attended regularly to his work, just as prompt and careful, regarding every detail as though he were newly appointed and not a discharged hand.

After a couple of weeks Tim got a job in the village, but the pay was much smaller than he had been receiving in the railway's employ. Yet the family managed to live on