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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

BY AUNT BECKY.

Dear Boys and Girls:

How do you like all this snow? For the boys and girls who live in the city there is not much hardship, but the little ones in the country must have had some hard experiences. We are all now looking forward to the spring, with the awakening of bird and flower, and then not so long till the summer, when those of us who can will away to lake and mountain and enjoy a short respite from school and other duties. Our little readers are not very fond of letter writing, are they?

Your loving friend,

AUNT BECKY.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I am writing you again now that the holidays are past. I am not going to school because I have sore eyes, and my father is going to take me to Toronto to see a specialist soon. We had a Christmas tree and Santa Claus was good to us. I got a bigle and a train, a Jack in the Box and an alligator, a story book, and a pair of moccasins. My two brothers and sisters got lots of things, too. I cannot tell you them all. We had plenty of fun during the holidays. My brother and I cut wood every evening after school and bring it in the house all ourselves, and my father says he is going to pay us for doing it. That is all for this time. Wishing you a happy New Year. I remain,

Your loving nephew,

EMMET D.

Sudbury, Ont.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I am writing you again to-day. We got the True Witness to-day and there is just one letter in it. I hope the boys and girls are not going to forget the corner, because I like reading it so well. We had a pleasant vacation at Christmas. Santa Claus brought me a nice doll and a nice little pan to bathe her in, a handkerchief, a tuque, and a pair of rubbers and lots of sweets. We had a spelling match at school to-day and sister could not get me down. That is all for this time. Wishing you a happy New Year.

From your little friend,

BEATRICE D.

Sudbury, Ont.

Dear old Aunt Becky:

As I saw my letter in print I am going to write another. I go to school every day, and I am in the eighth grade. Our teacher's name is Miss Barry, and I like her fine. There was a snowstorm Monday and made the roads very bad, but they are getting cleared out again. My eldest sister attends the convent in St. Louis. She has been there over two years now. She is going back tomorrow, I think. There are only twelve on the register in our school this term. It is a country place, and some of the children have a long distance to walk. We have catechism every night after school this year. Our parish priest was here for Sunday and is here yet. He has three missions to attend and he is not here very often. Now dear old Aunt Becky, as news is scarce I will close, saying good-bye, from

WASHINGTON R.

Kouchibouguac, Kent Co., N.B.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I just got the True Witness. I was very sorry to see only one letter in it when there are so many of us little girls and boys that could write you each week. I meant to have written you every week, but one thing and another has prevented me. I am very fond of reading and you have such nice little stories for us. Then we have nice reading in the Catholic News, and we get the Irish Rosary once a month. There are some very nice stories in it too. I know my catechism pretty well but I have it every day so as not to forget it. We have a slide out back of our house where we take a little recreation by sliding down it on our sleds. The weather has been so cold I have not been out much to get any news. I hope all your nieces will write you this week. Trusting this will find you enjoying good health. Lovingly,

ROSE.

Granby, Que.

A BRAVE BOY.

From Derby, Conn., comes the following thrilling incident. Clutching a red flag, and picking his way as best he could amid stifling smoke and flame, Bernard Brady, twelve years old, ran over the ties of a burning railroad bridge, and, flagging the passenger train from New Haven, prevented what might have been a terrible disaster. A spark from a locomotive ignited the covered portion of a wooden tree-

tle-work across the Naugatuck river between this city and Ansonia. The flames spread rapidly, and when Thomas Conway, the aged gate-tender, discovered them, the whole covered portion was on fire.

The train was nearly due. Not being lithe enough to cross the ties himself, he passed the red flag to young Brady, the only person he saw near, and told him to reach the Derby side if he possibly could. The trestle is one thousand feet long, but the covered portion, which was on fire, extends only two hundred feet and is in the middle. Beyond the trestle is a curve, and Conway knew that the train must be flagged before it reached the trestle or it would plunge into the burning bridge.

Conway saw young Brady disappear in the covered portion, swallowed up in the flames and smoke. It seemed ages in the fiery cavern, but the plucky youth kept on and had reached a point a hundred yards beyond the trestle when he sank down exhausted. When he heard the train coming he waved the flag. The engine-driver saw the signal, and stopped the train two hundred and fifty feet from the burning ties.

THE SHADOW ON THE STEPS.

"When I was a child," began Mother.

They all looked up in a moment. Everyone knows that the stories that begin that way are the best of all—unless it be those that begin with "Once upon a time."

"When I was a child," said Mother again, smiling at the eager faces about her, "I was almost as timid and as much afraid of the dark as Benny, here."

They all smiled a little consciously at this, for some of them had been teasing Benny a little about being so timid, and Benny was the youngest of all the seven—and only seven years old. Benny blushed and wriggled and twisted his head sideways, so nobody but Mother could see him. Mother's hand stole down and slipped upon his.

"My father, your dear grandfather," Mother went on, "was always trying to make me brave and courageous, always trying to show me how foolish it is to be timid. 'The coward dies a hundred deaths, my daughter,' he often quoted to me; 'the brave man dies but once.' I know, too, how silly I was to be frightened, especially when, as was often the case, there was nothing to fear. But still—well, perhaps some of you know how I felt about it. I except all of you have been frightened at least once."

The children all looked a little conscious, now, even Robbie, who is almost fourteen. "You see, once, when Robbie was as little as Benny—but that's another story, and Robbie isn't afraid now. Only, he doesn't always remember not to tease Benny for being afraid."

"Go on, Mother; please go on," they all urged her, anxious to get right into the story. Mother smiled and went on.

"Well, one night, when I was about eleven, Jenny Maxwell, who lived next door to us, was having a birthday party. Your Aunt Alice, my sister, was ill with a sore throat, so she couldn't go to the party, of course. And Uncle Rob had another engagement. So I got your grandfather to watch me across the open door-yard between the two houses. It was all nonsense, and I knew it, because we never had tramps nor anything of that kind in Greenville, while it was really only a few steps to Jenny's front door. But I couldn't persuade myself not to be frightened, so your grandfather helped me out as I tell you. And he told me that if I could call out to him when I was ready to come home he would stand in the front door and watch me run back."

I would talk and call to them all the way to the door. I was ashamed, you see, to let them know that I was afraid to go that little step alone. But I stayed behind a moment telling Mrs. Maxwell how your Aunt Alice was that evening, and when I got to the front door all the other children were some distance down the street. I didn't like to call to your grandfather for fear Mrs. Maxwell would find out that I was afraid. So I stood there a few moments, hoping she would come to the door for something and stand there while I raced home. She did come for a moment, but she only asked if I'd lost anything, then said good night and closed the door after me. And there I stood on the front step, out in the big night world, alone."

Again Benny's fingers tightened about Mother's.

"Oh-h-h! Mamsie," he whispered, very low.

"I wanted to call to your grandfather, but I knew that Mrs. Maxwell would come hurrying to the door if I did so, and I hated to let her know that I was afraid more than ever. So I just stood there and trembled until I saw a light in our own sitting-room—just across the black patch of shadow thrown by the Maxwell house—go out. I knew then that your grandfather and grandfather were going upstairs for the night, and I made a wild dash and got across the door-yard somehow. And when I got to the front steps—"

"What was it? What was it?" they all cried out as Mother hesitated.

"Oh, Mamsie, do go on!"

"Something big and black—and dreadful looking lay on the top step, reaching partly down the second," continued Mother, "and my heart almost stopped beating. I didn't know what it was. I was scared of it, I knew I was oh, so frightened. And I felt that I dared not scream or make a sound, somehow. I didn't know what the awful thing was, or how it would act if I aroused it, you see."

Benny climbed right up on Mother's knee at this point. It seemed so much more sociable than even the footstool at her feet.

"Presently a light shone out above me and I knew that your grandfather and grandmother had gone up to bed—or at least to their bedroom. I felt more than ever lonely and frightened, but still I dare not cry out or do anything that might startle or annoy that awful thing on the top step. Presently the moon went behind a cloud and it looked bigger and blacker than ever, though not quite so distinct. Then, while it was still very gloomy, I went down the walk a little ways—creeping backward with my eyes still fixed on the monster, and crept around to the back door."

"It was very still and dark on the side pavement, and more than once I felt very frightened. But I kept on hoping I should find the back door open—although I knew at heart I shouldn't—until I got there and found it locked. The house cat flew out of the nook behind the garbage pail with a rush as I turned the handle, and that scared me worse than ever. I never thought of calling out from the back door. I only crept, crying and trembling, back to the front. And there just as big and black and horrid as ever lay that awful Thing on the top step."

"I don't know how long I stood there, trembling, sobbing miserably under my breath, praying to God to help me in some way, looking from the big black Thing to the big black sky above me, studded with tiny star-points, and with a fitful, uncertain moon lighting up everything strangely, now and then, only to sink behind a heavy cloud the next moment and make everything seem gloomy. Perspiration stood out on my cheeks and forehead, and yet I kept shivering. I don't know what would have happened to me, after awhile if—"

"If what, Mamsie? If what?" cried all the children, so impatient to hear that they swarmed all about her. "Tell us, tell us, quick."

"If your grandfather hadn't thought it was very late for Mrs. Maxwell to let little girls stay at a party, and looked over to the Maxwell house to find it all dark. Then she told your grandfather that perhaps he had better come to the front door to look for me. And he did."

And in half a minute your grandmother was down in the hall beside us, urging me to tell her the trouble, scolding me gently and comforting me all in one. And I don't think that ever in my life was I fonder of my parents or more thankful to see them. I couldn't bear to think of going to bed alone, that evening, so your grandmother and I slept in the same bed."

"And the big black Thing, Mamsie? What was it? Do tell me quick!"

Mother smiled oddly a moment, looking down at little Benny with a peculiarly tender expression. Then she pressed his face close against her, and placing one hand beneath his chin, turned it up until his eyes looked right into hers.

"Oh, the big black Thing," she said, still smiling. "Well—it taught me a lesson. When, the next morning, your dear grandfather reminded me how foolish and cowardly it is to be frightened, and how much suffering we might often save ourselves—and often save other people into the bargain—by meeting our fears bravely, I was quite ready to listen. For, you see, if I'd gone up to the big black Thing bravely it would never have scared me. And if I hadn't been too frightened to cry out or call your grandfather I need only have been frightened for just a moment anyway, whereas I must have cried and trembled for nearly half an hour. And as to the big black Thing itself—"

"Oh, Mamsie dear!" they simply could not refrain from interrupting, even the oldest of them joining in.

"What was it? Please, please tell us now!"

"What was it?" and Mother's smile was queer, more whimsical than ever. "Why it was the shadow of the big lilac bush that grew by the front door!"—Ethel M. Colson.

LITTLE LAUGHS.

Commander Brownson tells of a German, a recruit in the naval service, who during a certain watch was in accordance with the regulations, calling the hours.

"Seven bells and all iss vell!" called the German correctly enough. Those who heard the next call were much astonished by this amusing variation:

"Eight bells, and all iss not vell. I haf droppit my hat overboard."

One day a thin man and a fat man started down the same street, each with the purpose to sell oranges. The thin man was energetic and impressed all as a hustler; the fat man was indolent, as fleshy people are apt to be. The thin man would yell:

"Oranges, oranges, n-i-c-c. Ju-i-c-y oranges, two for five, three for ten, thirty cents a dozen; n-i-c-c oranges!"

When the thin man would cease for breath, the fat man would say:

"Here, too!"

WELCOMED THE KICKS.

There was an old southern negro who had been working for a cotton planter time out of mind. One morning he came to his employer and said:

"I see gwine quit, boss."

"What's the matter, Mose?"

"Well, sah, yer manager, Mistah Winter, ain't kicked me in de las' free mums."

"I ordered him not to kick you any more. I don't want anything like that around my place. I don't want any one to hurt your feelings, Mose."

"Ef I don't git any more kicks I's gwine to quit. Ebery time Mistah Winter used ter kick and cuff me when he wuz mad he always git 'shamed of hisse'f and gimme a quat'ah. I's done los' enuff money a'ready wid his heah foolishness 'bout hurtin' ma feelin's."—Saturday Evening Post.

MOTHER'S EXCUSES TO TEACHERS.

Miss Brown: You must stop teach my Lizzie fysical torture she needs yet readin' an' figors mit sums more as that, if I want her to do jumpin' I kin make her jump.—Mrs. Canavowsky.

An Irish Reporter's Expedient

A notable old journalist, Chris Healy, has just been buried in Dublin. He reported the history of Ireland for more than half a century, and was in the middle of everything that was anything in the political life of the country, during the career of many Irish movements. The fact of his holding a surname in common with a leading politician (Tim Healy) proved very useful to him once.

He was told off to report a great Land League meeting down the country, at which Parnell himself was to speak. Chris Healy unfortunately missed the train that would have borne him to his destination in time, but being a man of resource, he did not return to his editor to beg for mercy. He went to the nearest telegraph office and dispatched this wire to Charles Stewart Parnell at the place of meeting: "Intended going down; unfortunately missed train; going by next train. Please postpone proceedings. Healy."

Parnell, delighted, informed the committee that "Tim Healy was coming by a later train and the meeting must be postponed until his arrival." The committee, overjoyed, were only too glad to accede. When the train was due, Parnell himself and all the other leading speakers, with the committee and bands, both brass and flute, marched up the railway station with flags flying and flutes tooting and drums beating to meet and greet the great Parliamentary champion.

When the train pulled up at the station the deputation ran frenziedly up and down the carriages. Parnell, seeing Chris Healy step out, recognized that he was a Dublin reporter whom he had frequently observed at Land League meetings, walked forward to him and said: "I beg your pardon, but did Healy travel by this train? We have held back our meeting awaiting him."

"Yes, Mr. Parnell," the modest reporter replied, "my name is Healy. It was very kind of you, indeed, to await me. For it would have been as much as my situation was worth if I had failed to get your speech."

Parnell was a deadly serious man but he unexpectedly forgot to be grave this time for once in his life.

Tess—"So Mr. Grossum really proposed to you!"

Jess—"Yes, while we were strolling in the cemetery we came to their family grave, and he asked me how I'd like to be buried there some day, with his name on the stone above me."

DRUGGING CHILDREN.

The mother who gives her little one "soothing" stuff when it cries surely does not realize that she is simply drugging it into temporary insensibility with a poisonous opiate. But that is just what she is doing. All the so-called "soothing" medicines contain poisonous opiates; they are all harmful—some of them dangerous, and should never be given to children. Baby's Own Tablets are sold under a positive guarantee that they contain no opiate or harmful drug. The Tablets speedily cure all stomach troubles, constipation, diarrhoea, and simple fevers; they break up colds, prevent croup, ease the pain of teething, and give healthy, natural sleep. When little ones are cross, peevish and ailing, give them Baby's Own Tablets, and you will find there's a smile in every dose. You can get the Tablets from any medicine dealer, or by mail at 25 cents a box by writing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

THE WORD "HANDICAP."

In former days a "handicap" was conducted thus: A, wishing for something which belonged to B, say a horse, would offer his watch for it. If B agreed, C was chosen to fix the sum that should be given by one or the other to make the exchange fair. The three then put down a stake, and A and B, each holding a piece of money, put their hands into a cap or hat, or into their pockets, while C, enlarging on the respective merits of the horse and watch, made his award in as rapid and complete a manner as possible, ending it with the words, "Draw, gentlemen!"

A and B instantly drew out and opened their hands. If money appeared in both the exchange was made; if in one only, or in neither, the award was off, and in every case C took the stakes.

Newfoundland Correspondence.

The Pope received in private audience lately Archbishop Howley and his nephew, Rev. Alex. Howley. His Holiness enquired most cordially about the conditions of Newfoundland and the progress of Catholicism, and hearing of the progress of the Church in old Terra Nova, was greatly pleased. He sent his blessing to the Catholics of the Island.

An accident which happened a resident of a nearby settlement shows the heroic fortitude of Newfoundlanders in times of danger. James Neville, of Topsail, went to the woods to cut firewood, and while in the act of cutting a large tree which he had felled, the axe slipped and was driven with great force through the knee cap of the right leg, splintering the bone and severing some of the leading veins. Bleeding profusely the man was obliged to travel two miles before he obtained assistance, crippling painfully along, and halting every few minutes as the exertion told on him. On reaching Topsail Road, he collapsed from pain and loss of blood. There, after some time waiting, Robert Mercer found him lying on the road and took him home, where he was attended to.

Rev. John O'Reilly, D.D., the popular parish priest of Salmonier, is at present sojourning in Europe, and on his return will probably resign his parish to accept a professorship at St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, N.Y. Rev. Wm. Jackman is at present acting parish priest.

Three shipwrecked crews arrived a few days ago by the Allan Line SS. Carthaginian. The accounts of suffering given by the captain and the crews are thrilling in the extreme.

The amusement clubs at the various Catholic society halls are well patronized each evening, and pleasant hours are spent in various games.

A Debasing Avocation.

We are informed that complaint has been made that our remarks are sometimes not edifying, which may go to prove that some people think they are pious and they are only bilious. The charge of lack of edification is based on a few words about the saloon-keeper. We might have referred to his benefactions and recounted the doings of departed worthy and model drink-dispensers. We ought to have dwelt on the well-known joviality of the bar-keeper, and have touched upon the happy family reunion every night after the bottles are corked and the contents of the cash-box noted. But we simply referred to it as a dirty business. It is to our mind a pitiable and debasing avocation—the most repugnant to any one who desires to add to the betterment of the world. A man who fails in everything demanding brains and character can achieve success as a rum-seller. Other fields of human activity call for ambition and self-development; in this nothing that can be coveted by any self-respecting citizen is necessary. The man who cannot gain a livelihood without resorting to a business that "trades in and fattens on intemperance," over which hangs a cloud of social and religious disgrace, which is responsible for nine-tenths of the misery among the working classes, must be dead to every impulse of true civilization.

Speaking some years ago in behalf of his orphan asylums, the late Bishop Hendricken, of Providence, declared that "in the far greater number of cases, these helpless children were dependent upon alms because saloons murdered their parents." We might write on, but for the present let us inform the saloon-keeper that he is not by any means a potent personage in the community. He is regarded as a menace to its peace and happiness and religion, and it would do him a world of good to know how he is viewed by wives and daughters and fathers. If he ever had any influence that day is gone. Our leaders wish to see no Catholic name on the list of rum-sellers, and the right-thinking citizen would rather see his son in a coffin than in the business. We write in the interest of the saloon-keeper, because, in the words of a great prelate, we cannot feel in our heart such hatred for any man as to wish him to spend his days behind a bar.—Catholic Record, London, Ont.