

BOYS AND GIRLS

Priscilla's Letter.

(By Hilda Richmond, in 'The Wellspring'.)

(Concluded.)

'She can't have that coffee,' said Priscilla to herself after a glance at the clock. 'The waggon is making its last round and won't be here again, for the store will close in ten minutes.' Mr. Smith often delivered parcels after hours to careless and inconsiderate housekeepers, but to-day he was half sick, and Priscilla determined not to tell him about the belated order. 'She isn't one of our customers, anyway,' she thought as she looked up the number in the book, 'so it doesn't make any difference. Why shouldn't I take it?' The question came so suddenly to her mind that she fairly gasped. Mrs. Malcolm lived only two blocks beyond her home, and she might as well help the firm that much. Two minutes later she was weighing out the coffee and shortly after started home.

'You brought it, Priscilla!' said Mrs. Malcolm. 'Well, now, I call that downright mean of Mr. Forges to get you to carry that big parcel away down here. If I had thought for a single minute that they would get you to deliver it, I never would have ordered it. I'm astonished beyond all measures.'

'I did it of my own accord, Mrs. Malcolm. Your order was too late for the delivery and I didn't mention it to anyone. It's only a few blocks out of my way and I need the exercise. How pretty your tables look.'

'They do look nice,' said Mrs. Malcolm, 'but we are sadly disappointed in our helpers. Several of the girls are out of town and two are sick, so we feel doubtful about the success of the social.'

'Maybe I could help. Lately I've been helping mother wash dishes, and I could make sandwiches or cut cakes. I'd be glad to do it if you care to have me try.'

'Of course, I'd like to have you, Priscilla. You used to be one of our best workers before—' She hesitated and turned red as if treading on dangerous ground, but Priscilla broke the awkward pause by saying cheerfully: 'I'll consider it settled then, that I'm to help to-night. I'll get mother to come with me.'

'By all means. I don't know when I've seen your mother. We used to be together so much and now I seldom get a glimpse of her.'

Priscilla hurried home and began searching in the closet for her old white dress. At last she found it hanging limp and forlorn under a lot of discarded garments, but the buckle to the belt was missing. She remembered that it was tucked away in her desk, so she hurriedly rummaged it out. In doing so she came across the envelope for Cousin Amanda with the words 'To be delivered after my death,' and a hearty laugh ran through the room. 'I hope that won't be for a long time,' she said happily as she put the buckle on the belt. 'I wonder if pressing this will do any good.'

'Mother,' she said, going to the kitchen where her tired mother in a faded dress was trying to finish the ironing by daylight, 'are you going to Mrs. Malcolm's social to-night?'

'Why no, dear,' said her mother in surprise. 'What made you think of such a thing?'

'Because I want to go,' said Priscilla, taking possession of the iron. 'You sit down and rest a little so I can have the board. No, it won't hurt my limb a bit. I'll sit down to it if that will please you. I'm going to help Mrs. Malcolm and she wants you to come, too. Next week I'm going to hire somebody to do this washing and the ironing, too. Mark and Janet and you and father are not going to do everything. I know Mary and Janet are both working after hours to pay up old debts, and I'm going to help you.'

Mrs. Harvey's dress was decidedly out of style that evening and Priscilla's lacked the crisp newness of the frocks worn by the other girls, but both were so busy and happy they had no time to think of clothes. Priscilla, taking tickets, was welcomed so heartily by her friends that the soft red glowed in her cheeks, and Mrs. Harvey, buttering rolls in a corner of the big kitchen with some friends, forgot all about her household cares and her

long absence from such gatherings, as she laughed and chatted. Altogether it was a delightful evening, and the Harvey family had a little private celebration after Priscilla had gone to bed that night, over the cake and orange custard she and her mother had brought home to them.

'I'll tell you what it is, Priscilla,' said Mr. Smith suddenly one day late in the next autumn, 'I have a cousin I wish you could be with, or rather I wish she could be with you for a little while. She is the most discontented, selfish, morbid unreasonable creature you ever saw, and I know if she could see how bravely you go about your work every day, it would do her a world of good. She is—is lame, too, but nothing at all like you. Mrs. Smith and I often invite her to visit us just so she could get acquainted with you, but she won't stir out of her room.'

'You'll have to get some one to write her a letter,' said Priscilla, turning as red as the scarlet bow on her trim white shirt waist. Then she told for the first time of the letter sealed up at home that had done so much for her. 'I've had it in my hands time and again to burn it,' she confessed, 'but somehow it's too precious. I'm never going to ask Cousin Amanda if she did it on purpose or by accident, for it doesn't make a bit of difference. I think I'll keep it always for fear I might sometime have a relapse. I almost cheated Mark out of his college course—he's going next year—and the rest of the family out of all their good times, so there's no telling what I might do again, if the letter wasn't in my desk always to remind me. You'll never tell, will you?'

'Indeed I won't!' said Mr. Smith, taking the firm white fingers into his big hand for a hearty shake. Then looking at the trim figure in the pretty and sensible new dress, he said fervently: 'You'll never have a relapse. You're not the relapsing kind.'

Good-by! God Bless You!

(By Eugene Field.)

I like the Anglo-Saxon speech

So straight in all its dealings.

It takes a hold and seems to reach

Way down into your feelings.

That some folks deem it rude I know

And therefore they abuse it,

But I have never found it so:

Before all else I choose it.

I don't object that men should air

The Gallic they have paid for.

With 'Au revoir,' 'Adieu, ma chere,'

For that's what French was made for.

But when a crouny takes your hand

At parting to address you

He drops all foreign lingo and

He says: 'Good-by! God bless you!'

I love the words perhaps because

When I was leaving mother

Standing at last in solemn pause

We looked at one another,

And I—I saw in mother's eyes

The love she could not tell me—

A love eternal as the skies,

Whatever fate befel me.

She put her arms about my neck

And soothed the pain of leaving,

And though her heart was like to break,

She spoke no word of grieving,

She let no tears bedim her eyes;

For fear that might distress me;

But kissing me she said good-by

And asked our God to bless me.

What Shall the Day Bring Forth?

(Mary Joanna Porter, in the 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

The great event was past. Oakton High School had had its graduating exercises. Through the weeks of preparation, writing of essays, practicing of declamations, rehearsals of songs, gathering of ferns and flowers, decorations of the Town Hall—all these had received attention.

Then the eventful evening had arrived. Ten boys and girls had graduated with honor. The official who presented the diplo-

mas had announced: 'Mary Somers, fitted for Bryn Mawr; Margaret Upton, fitted for Vassar; Emily Deland, fitted for Wellesley; Harriet Jones, fitted for Mt. Holyoke; Bessie Stevens, general English course.' The names of the boy graduates followed. It is with Bessie Stevens that we have to do. How was it that, when the other girls of her class were preparing for college, she took the simple course in English? This question was whispered about through the hall. Certainly it was not for lack of means that she was about to drop from the list of enrolled students, for her father, Mr. Stevens, was one of the wealthy men of Oakton.

Yet Bessie had no mother. An energetic, kindly housekeeper regulated matters in the Stevens mansion. Bessie understood thoroughly how much her father needed her companionship and sympathy, while her younger brothers required sisterly guardianship. So that, although naturally fond of study and altogether filled with girlish ambitions, she unselfishly decided that she would remain at home after her course in the High School was concluded. It had cost her a struggle to make this decision, but she felt that it was for the best.

The first two weeks after the graduation exercises passed along quietly enough. Bessie enjoyed the freedom of vacation, it is true. Yet she missed the routine of school duties and the companionship of her young friends, most of whom had left town for the summer. Mr. Stevens' business required his presence in the city and he thought it best to keep his family with him. They were not deprived of fresh air, nor of exercise, for they had carriages at command, and they all rode wheels, and played tennis and sometimes went rowing.

So Bessie planned to have a happy summer in the society of those who were dearest to her. She decided to make bouquets every week for the Flower Mission. Had she not a large garden to choose flowers from? And would it not be delightful work when she thought that she was gladdening sad lives? Then she would devote an hour each day to reading to lively little Fred, who could be kept quiet in no other way, but who appeared to be happiest when some one was reading to him. She would take another hour for practising; not only because she was fond of music herself, but because her father dearly loved to listen to her as she played for him in the twilight. It reminded him, he said, of her mother's playing in the days when he was courting. Then, in the early autumn, the King's Daughters Circle, to which Bessie belonged, was to hold a sale, and Bessie was to have charge of the fancy table; so she must do considerable for that. Thus, between work and play, she hoped for a summer both happy and useful. But who can tell what shall be on the morrow?

Bessie and her brother James were wheeling quietly along one afternoon on the avenue running past their home when a man recklessly speeding an automobile overtook them. There was a sudden jar and rush, Bessie was unconscious of anything more until she awoke, on her own bed, feeling very feeble and languid, and with two surgeons carefully examining her. 'There are no bones broken,' was the verdict. 'The patient has had a wonderful escape from death. She must lie perfectly still for some time.'

Bessie was not told all of this. She was told only that she had had an accident and would soon be better, but meanwhile she must lie still and rest. Nothing seemed to her then more desirable; but as the hours grew into days and the days into weeks, and the weeks into months, the resting became very tedious. All through that long, beautiful summer, when everything out of doors was full of life and charm, Bessie had to stay in her own room.

'Just keep quiet. Just keep quiet.' This the doctor said day after day, until it seem-

BOYS

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