

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

BY AUNT BECKY.

Dear Boys and Girls:

I know you are all feeling happy. Santa Claus has been to see you and has given you a proof of his love. He only visits, we are told, the good boys and girls, in which case no reader of this page, I am sure, has been forgotten. It would be so nice to tell us all about the lovely gifts you received, and the jolly times you had during the Christmas holidays. But, remember, mail your letters so that they may reach me by Saturday the latest. I know some have been disappointed at not seeing their letter the week they wrote it. That is because we did not receive it until Monday or Tuesday, which is too late. Now, dear children, I wish you may all enjoy a year brimful of health, pleasure and every blessing your little hearts may desire.

Your loving friend,

AUNT BECKY.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I am a little boy of ten and I like to read the letters on the children's page. I go to school every day that I can, but the snow will soon stop me. We have a long piece to go. There are four of us going to school. My little brother James wrote a letter, and I thought I would write one too. My papa is a blacksmith, and I am going to learn it when I get old enough. My papa worked at the little houses on the ice, where they are fishing for smelts. It is quite a business down here in the winter time. So good-bye, Aunt Becky, I wish you a happy Xmas. From your little friend,

LEO M.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I am eight years old. I thought I was old enough to write this letter. My brother wrote one last week. Santa Claus is soon coming and I hope he will bring me lots of nice things. One of my brothers wrote a letter to Santa to tell him what we all wanted. I think I will tell you some of the things I asked for. A doll and carriage and other things. My little sister says she wants a blue dolly. I have only one sister. She is three years old. I have four brothers. The youngest six. He wants lots of things. I will write after Christmas and tell you what we all got. I go to school every day. I like it well. We are to have a Christmas tree in our parlor. We have one every Christmas. I am sleepy now, good-bye.

Your little friend,

MAMIE.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I thought I would try and write a few lines as this is my first letter to the corner. I enjoy reading the letters very much. We have a great time skating and sliding on the hills these lovely nights. I am in the third book and like going to school very much, but I do not go to school very steady, as we have a long way to go. I live on a farm and I like doing chores very much. I am anxious waiting for Christmas and I suppose there are a great many more boys and girls as anxious as I am when Santa dear will make his visits around. We are going to have a Christmas tree in our school but I don't think I will be able to go. I think this is all for this time. Hoping to see my letter in print, I remain,

Your affectionate friend,

JAMES M.

Dewittville.

ADELINE'S NEW-OLD DOLL.

Adeline's father was poor, so poor that he could not buy his little girl a doll. This was the grief of Adeline's days. Her friend Edna owned a pretty doll named Lillian Alice, and how Adeline did long for one too! Still, having Edna's doll sometimes to hold for a long five minutes was better than nothing, and when that pleasure was taken from her, Adeline shed many tears.

Adeline's father and mother moved away from the bare little city home into the wide country, where the father was going to work on a farm, and Edna and her beautiful doll would be seen no more.

The house to which Mr. Royce took his family was very old, and for years nobody lived there except the squirrels, the mice and the birds. It looked dark, dirty and desolate; but the farmer had offered it to them rent free, and they went to work to make it as tidy and pleasant as possible. Mr. Royce patched up the doors and windows, while Mrs.

terflies, and squirrels, and swing, and read my picture-book, and sometimes I cry—just a little bit.

Twelve o'clock! That's a beautiful hour. The clock strikes a lot of times, and the big whistle goes, and the bell rings, and papa comes home, and dinner's ready.

The one and two hours are lost. Mamma always carries me off to take a nap. I don't like naps. They waste time. When we wake up the clock strikes three. N'en I have on my pink dress, and we go walking or riding. And so the three and four and five hours are gone.

At six o'clock Bossy comes home, and I have my drink of warm milk. N'en I put on my white gown, and kiss everybody "Good-night," and say "Now I lay me," and get into bed. Mamma says, "Now the sun and the butterflies, and my little baby are all gone to bed, and to sleep, sleep." So I shut my eyes tight, and next you know it's morning. An' that's all the time there is.

HOW PUSSY WAS SAVED A WHIPPING.

Dear pussy, I love you, an' I's your true friend, 'Cause I saved a whippin' to-day. When cook missed her custard, and everyone said "It was Puss that stole it away."

You know you are naughty sometimes, pussy dear, So in course you get blamed, an' all that! An' cook took a stick, and she 'clared she would beat. The thief out of that mizzable cat.

But I didn't feel comfort'ble down in my heart, So I saved you a whippin', you see, 'Cause the custard was stolen by a bad little girl.

Who felt dreffely sorry with shame! An' it wouldn't be fair to whip pussy, in course, When that bad little girl was to blame!

"Was it my little girlie?" my dear mamma said, I felt dreffely scared, but I nodded my head.

An' then mamma laughed, "Go find nurse, for I guess There's some custard to wash off a little girl's dress."

When, then, 'course they knew it was I, an' not you, Who stole the custard an' then ran away.

But it's best to be true in the things that we do, An'—that's how I saved you a spankin' to-day.

A MAGNANIMOUS VICTOR.

A pretty little story of a spelling class in China is told by the Golden Rule.

The youngest of the children had, by hard study, contrived to keep his place so long that he seemed to claim it by right of possession. Growing too self-confident, however, he relaxed his efforts, and one day missed a word, which was immediately spelled by the boy standing next to him.

The face of the victor expressed the triumph he felt, yet he made no move toward taking the place, and when urged to do so firmly refused, saying:

"No, me not go; me not make Ah Fun's heart sorry."

That was even better than the apology by Whittier's little friend, who was sorry she spelled the word, and hated to go above him—but went.

DICKENS AND CHILDREN.

With Dickens, the architect of dream children, it is again, as with Wordsworth, always the lonely child, and with what a love did his great heart go out to the little beings his imagination has made immortal!

What an almost divine pity he has for the fears and bewilderments and hardships of their dependent little lives, so at the mercy of grim elders, and the sport of all manner of heartless bullying forces! Poor David Copperfield and that dreadful new father-in-law of his with the black whisks—how one's blood runs cold for him as Mr. Murdstone takes him into a room and sternly expounds to him, in ogreish words, the iron discipline to be expected for breaches of the law in that sepulchral household!

Children are not beaten nowadays, I am told. If not, the change is largely due to Dickens, who has certainly done much to mitigate the former severe lot of the child—in a regime where the father was little more to his children than the stern policeman and executioner of home, the dread Rhadamanthus in the best parlor, who must on no account be disturbed by childish laughter, and to offend whom was to invite swift and certain doom.

How much has Dickens done to mitigate the lot of the schoolboy by his savage satire of Dotheboys' Hall, and the lot of all poor boys whatsoever by the pleading of Oliver Twist! There are few strokes in literature so trenchant in their tragic laughter, so irresistibly comic in their shattering criticism of human nature, as that scene which has passed into the proverbs of the world—the scene, of course, where poor starved Oliver asks for more. The astonishment on the face of the cook is positively Olympian in its humor. A charity boy asks for more! Why, the very walls of the institution rocked, and the earth quaked at such a request, and the rumor of it passed like thunder from room to room, till even the Board of Directors, then in session, must have heard it. Great heavens! "Oliver Twist has asked for more."—Success.

By working with his folk upon the farm he had not only the opportunity of incessantly watching the appearance of figures of different sorts of toil, but he obtained as well an actual knowledge of the farm laborer's crafts. He learned how to plow and how to sow; he learned all about the peculiar nature of all kinds of crops and every kind of domestic animal, and he became acquainted with the discomfort, with the agony that arises from continuous bodily exertion, with all that a farm laborer suffers from exposure to the scorching sun and biting wind or frost.

Millet was happy in his instructors. His great uncle, Charles Millet, a priest, divided his time between laboring upon the farm and giving instruction to his little nephews and nieces. At all times this priest impressed upon his grand-nephew the necessity of being industrious, upright and courageous and from him proceeded the impulse of that education that sent Millet more suitably equipped for the task that lay before him than many another artist whose name has been written large in history.

It is said that Virgil's words, "It is the hour when the great shadows descend upon the plain," first revealed to the boy the beauty of his own surroundings, and first lighted that fire which was to be productive of some of the finest paintings of evening scenes that the world is ever likely to possess.

As to his Bible and Virgil, he read and re-read them, and always in Latin. And Samsier says, "I have never heard a more eloquent translator of these two books." Instead of being an illiterate person, indeed, when he went to Paris, Millet, "The Wild Man of the Woods," as he was called by Delaroches pupils, among whom he found himself, was already a cultivated man. His education had been far better than if he had been an ordinary member of a bourgeois or even of a noble family. Its great characteristics were its thoroughness, its simplicity and its refinement—the very characteristics that make his own works lovable.

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IRELAND'S CONVENT SCHOOLS. Preaching on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of a new convent for the Marist Sisters at Tubbercurry, County Sligo, Ireland, recently, Bishop Cloghan said that within the last twelve months critics had been imported from another country to visit the convent schools of Ireland, with the object of giving the Government an exact statement of their educational status. According to the report of those critics the convent schools were vastly superior to any other schools in the country, and in some departments of their work, to even the best schools in England.

"It is beneath the dignity of a man," says the Providence Visitor, "to abuse any created thing; and to inflict pain needlessly upon dumb animals is not merely an abuse of created things, but makes also for the choking out of all the fine emotions by which man is essentially the noblest being in the visible universe. If a man is cruel to his horse he is likely to be cruel also to his wife and children."

The Leap Year Privilege.

(Written for the True Witness.)

(Continued from Page 2.)

ed as he read her previous partner's names.

"With pleasure. It is a long time since we danced together, is it not?" The little hint of regret in his tone and face was reflected in hers, as she replied.

"It need not have been so long, need it?" He did not answer her, and presently they were gliding in and out among the dancers, all unconscious of the many glances of surprise cast at Bently.

It was the last Leap Year dance, and as Bently seemed inclined to talk she led the way to a little room off the hall, and threw herself into a chair at a small table in the centre of the room. Bently drew one up and sat opposite her. They talked of the evening, the new books, some alterations in the house and a few more equally unimportant matters. Then conversation seemed suddenly forgotten for a few moments, till Bently raised a serious face to her and asked,

"Did you really think I would not come to-night, Elinor?" She hesitated, hardly knowing whether she had or not.

"I thought you ought to have come even at a little personal inconvenience," she answered slowly and frankly, and then impulsively added, "to tell you the real truth, I could not quite understand the way you have acted towards father and me, and I half expected that you would practically decline by not coming, despite the note you sent me." His gaze never faltered in its earnestness.

"I did inconvenience myself. I was working in the Bradford office at seven, caught the seven-thirty with a run, was delayed on hour in Lindley, dressed, etc., arrived at Harcourt House at eleven. I must be at my desk for seven to-morrow, though it will be New Year, so I have to catch the two-thirty express to return. You misjudged me, Elinor, a little."

"I am sorry I told you," she said, already repentant of her impulsive admission. "But I kept a dance for you, which ought to show I was not altogether hopeless. It is like old times to be with you again. Do you know that we have had no dancing since the whist party we got up together. Somehow I could never attempt anything without you. Father so set his heart on to-night that I could not refuse and Aunt Margaret looked after everything for me. I am not as fond of dancing as I used to be," she said, tapping the floor with her slipped foot in time with the music beyond.

"I had my last dance with you at Blondel's." Two fine lines cut his forehead for a second, and just the breath of a sigh escaped him. "I little thought then of what I should face next day." Elinor looked up, and for an instant their eyes met in mutual understanding.

"Why did you show so much indifference the night I came to tell you of our misfortune? I thought then that you had never cared."

"Oh! Bently, I was not indifferent. How can you ask me! My heart was so full that I felt words were useless," she answered.

"I tried to impress on you that we had better forget each other, and you only asked me to come soon again or some such thing. The other troubles were nothing to that. I left your house with such a distaste for life, that I prayed to die."

Elinor dashed a hot tear from her cheek.

"How you misjudged me. I have often wondered since what you did say that day. I heard nothing you said. I could only watch your face and wish that I might trust myself to tell you how sorry I was, but that nothing could matter between us anyhow. And you thought I did not care for you since you were no longer rich. Oh! Bently, how could you? That was why you would not come to see me, and returned my letters."

"You really cared, Elinor, all the time what happened to me?" he asked eagerly, "cared as you did that night, or only as you had before?" She bent her head for a moment in mute pain.

"I cared more than I could tell you and I cared for nothing since. What were all those years and years of friendship, what were all our confidences, what was that last night, if you could not trust me more?" Her tone was reproachful, but very gentle.

FATHER KÖNIG'S FREE NERVE TONIC
A VALUABLE FREE BOOK on Nervous Diseases and a sample bottle to any address. Poor get this medicine FREE! KÖNIG MED. CO., 100 Lake St., Chicago. Sold by Druggists at 50¢ per bottle, 1/2 doz for \$4.

"It was my wish that we should forget, before I thought you had ceased to care for me. After that I had no desire for anything. I have lived a year with only one glimpse of your face, and oh! Elinor, I missed you sorely. It is a horrid dream to me. Beside it the other trials are nothing." The very clasp of his hand was painful to her. The pent up misery of those months was written on his features.

Elinor did not reply, but gradually the color crept back to her cheeks and the strain seemed less.

"It has been an awful year to you and to me," she said at last. Half consciously Bently drew out his watch.

"It wants but seven minutes of its close," he remarked. "I am glad that we will see it die together."

Elinor's face lit up with a sudden resolve; and she caught his hand in hers.

"Bently, is it awful to be living on such a salary," she asked breathlessly.

"No," he laughed, with a quick return to his usual manner. "Rather jolly, in fact, especially since father is earning and I have all mine to myself. It is much more interesting to be spending a limited amount than to simply fill a check for every passing whim. I have loads to spend according to my present economy."

"Could you keep a house on it, and, well, with just a little more?"

"With a little more I would live in luxury. Yes, I suppose it could be done." She was leaning across the table, her eyes filled with her earnest purpose.

"Could—oh! Bently, do you think I could keep a house with that much money and—well, with just a little more?"

"You, Elinor," he exclaimed in surprise.

"Oh, won't you understand me, Bently. I said once before that there was nothing you could tell me I did not already know. I knew then that you loved me, and I know you did not want to see me in all these months because I was rich and you—you thought you were poor, and you vowed you would never ask me to marry you till you could give me what I was always used to. I never cared for your money, or your social position, you know that. Am I not telling you the truth?"

He nodded his head for answer.

"Well, I want to profit by the Leap Year privilege before it is too late. Won't you marry me, though I am rich, Bently?" To the man who sat before her it was the sweetest, brightest, coyest, trustiest face in all this great round world. He caught it in his two trembling hands and printed a kiss on the rosebud lips. Though the mistletoe had not been over her, I think it would have happened just the same, for mistletoe blooms only once in the year, and love is a never dying, never fading light wherever men and maids are found.

"You brave little woman, if you want me, there is nothing else I ask in life," he cried, rising and drawing her to him in his arms. "Elinor, dear, dear girl, I had almost thought that this could never be. I did not think you knew my heart so well."

"Perhaps," she said, her eyes misty with tears of joy, and a mischievous tone in her voice, "perhaps I did not know all you had to tell me that night, and I would like to be sure."

"I will tell you it all and win you again in the New Year," he said, and proved what I have already expressed as my belief, for the mistletoe was several feet away, but the rosebud lips were just as near.

Cling, clang, ding, dong, clang, clang. A merry ringing of bells great and small, broke in on the quiet. How they tinkled and boomed and thrilled, the silvery bells Elinor had hung in every nook and corner, and the great iron bells that rolled out on the air from each church and tower of London.

The old year had vanished, and the new was here.

"Tell me now, Bently. Right away," Elinor whispered. And he did.

I. McG.

Hungry Horace—Kind lady, can ye gimme somepin ter eat? I ain't ate nothin' sence day-ande yesterday.

Kind Lady—And what did you eat then?

Hungry Horace—Nothin' but de market report in an old paper.