

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

BY AUNT BECKY

Dear Girls and Boys:

I am so disappointed that no one but Maude C. took interest enough in the coming competition to send in their suggestions. I shall leave it open another week, that is, until the 19th. I know you have been having such a good time during the Christmas and New Year vacation that you could hardly be expected to think about the "Corner." However, I want all my girls and boys to put on their thinking caps and then tell me what sort of competition they would like to have. Remember, now, have all your suggestions in by Saturday, the 19th inst. Love to all my little nieces and nephews,

AUNT BECKY.

Dear Aunt Becky:

It gave me great pleasure to hear that you intend having another competition for the boys and girls, and as you kindly asked us to suggest something which would please us, I propose a composition on any subject you may wish to give. I have been trying to study that branch in school and would be pleased to give a specimen of my efforts.

Hoping it will meet with your approval and also of my little cousins, Your loving niece, MAUDE C.

Quebec, Jan. 4, 1907.

TWO LITTLE GIRLS.

I'm twins, I guess, 'cause my ma says I'm two little girls. An' one o' me is Good little girl, an' the other'n she calls Bad little girl as she can be. An' ma says so 'most every day. An' she's the funniest ma! 'Cause when my doll won't mind, an' I 'st cry, 'Why, nen my ma she sob and sigh, An' say, "Dear Good little girl, good-by!" Bad little girl's comed here again! I remain,

Last time 'at ma act' that a-way, I cried all to myself awhile. Out on the steps, an' nen I smile, An' get my doll all fix' in style, An' go in where ma 's at an' say: "Morning to you, mommy dear! Where's that Bad little girl wuz here? Bad little girl's goned clean away, An' Good little girl's comed back to stay." -James Whitcomb Riley.

HOW ONE MAN CHOOSES BOYS.

A gentleman who has charge of 200 boys in a large department store loves to talk about boys.

"How do you choose your boys?" was asked.

"My first question is: 'Who is the boy?' You see, it all depends upon the boy himself. You can judge the boy better from his appearance, his manner, his dress and the way he comes into an office than from any description of him. Character shows forth in little things; you can't hide it. I take boys by what you might almost term first impressions. I have 'sized him up' before he enters the office, the respectful and self-respectful way in which he meets my look and questions giving me an idea of his bringing up and the stuff he has in him. As to appearances, I look at once for these things: Polished shoes, clean clothes and clean finger-nails. Good clothes are not requisites. A boy's clothes may be ragged, his shoes may have holes in them, yet his appearance may still give evidence of a desire to be neat. I will not employ a cigarette smoker if I know it. As for reference, a boy's teacher is the best reference that he can have. The recommendation which a good boy in our employ gives a boy applying for a position always receives marked consideration. A stock boy's first advance is to stock boy, office boy or cadet. A stock boy attends to the work of whatever stock he is in. A cadet is general utility boy. An office boy works around some one of the offices of the house. We promote according to merit, length of service, or combined. Whenever possible we try to give our oldest employees preference, but if another boy who has not been here as long as another shows greater fitness for a vacancy, in justice to the house and the boy, he gets it. A cash boy gets \$2.50 a week; when he has been here three months, \$3; if he has shown marked ability, \$3.50.

They talked a good deal in German, some approving and some condemning, while Bonny and Liese stood aside partly comprehending, and Liese at any rate wishing it was all over.

But Herr Bruder had many friends and but few enemies among his musical brethren, so though some of them opposed the plan, thinking that they should rather have been given the place of honor, the majority were ready and anxious to put forward his little son and pupil, and to give him the benefit of such an opportunity of entering upon his father's life.

Presently a little fellow in a white sailor costume, with a very pale face, and round bead-like eyes, holding a violin in his hand, was, to the astonishment of the large assembly, handed on to the big platform.

They clapped him vociferously, and laughed good-naturedly, wondering what the little interlude meant, for no one dreamed that this mite of a child was intended as one of the performers.

Liese was taken to the piano. She also looked very pale, and was trembling violently, but she remembered what her uncle had said, and turned her head away from the people. Bonny was tuning up, and the first thing that Liese observed was that he did not seem to be able to get in tune. "Johann," she said softly, when he took the bow as if he were about to begin, "that isn't right a bit; can't you hear how sharp you have got it?"

LITTLE ODDITY By the Author of "Served Out."

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

Before they started they both went into Herr Bruder's room. "Johann," he said to Bonny, "I would not have chosen for you yet to play in public. That is a life not fitted for a little child like you, but I see that this may be a great opportunity for you, better than any I could devise. Go, my little one, and do your best. Think only of your music, and shut your eyes to the people. Think, too, that the composer is standing near, listening for you to do him justice, and ask the Father of all music to let His angels guide your hand."

To Liese's intense astonishment, Bonny caught hold of the Professor's hand, which was lying on the coverlet, with a look almost of terror in his face. "Herr Papa, Herr Papa," he cried suddenly. "I am so frightened. Oh, I must tell you—" then he stopped short and stood there perfectly silent, with a curious look on his young face.

"Little one, you shall not go unless you wish," Herr Bruder replied tenderly.

"I do want to go," Bonny replied quickly. "I will go."

"It is a wonderful child," Herr Bruder said, when they had departed. "It is the stuff of which geniuses is made. He will not be cast down by any difficulty."

"Did you pretend you were nervous?" Liese asked, when they were in the carriage.

Bonny stared at her blankly. She thought he was cross and would not answer. He had not heard.

All the way she thought he was in a very disagreeable temper. He sat in the railway carriage holding his violin in his arms, and never speaking a word. Liese thought it too bad, when she had come so much against her own wish, really only because he so much wanted her to. Herr Hausmann was waiting at the terminus to receive them. Now Bonny had taken a violent dislike to this man, and was barely civil to him. When spoken to, he answered in the short, sharp manner of days past, and sometimes he simply stared stupidly. Liese thought she had

never seen him look so silly, and she began to wonder whether he was really nervous. She was quite as much vexed with as sorry for him, because he would come, and had talked so grandly, that it was his own fault, and really almost served him right. Poor Bonny! How little anyone guessed what was troubling that precocious mind!

Well, at last the hour for the rehearsal drew near. Herr Hausmann's carriage came to the door, and into it stepped his wife, himself, and the two children, with a huge parcel of music. When they arrived at the place of performance it was already nearly filled, for a large number of people had been allowed to purchase tickets who would not be able to get places on the evening of the concert.

Bonny glanced swiftly around the hall with a troubled frown on his face that did not render it prepossessing.

Then Herr Hausmann took them into a room where a number of gentlemen were assembled, and explained to them the state of the case, with his proposal to introduce the child violinist as a substitute for his father, who was lying dangerously ill.

They talked a good deal in German, some approving and some condemning, while Bonny and Liese stood aside partly comprehending, and Liese at any rate wishing it was all over.

But Herr Bruder had many friends and but few enemies among his musical brethren, so though some of them opposed the plan, thinking that they should rather have been given the place of honor, the majority were ready and anxious to put forward his little son and pupil, and to give him the benefit of such an opportunity of entering upon his father's life.

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"What?" he asked, turning round to her, while several of the gentlemen looking on glanced at one another, and Herr Hausmann smiled across to them reassuringly.

"You're not in tune," she said again.

"Strike the note louder, then," he said abruptly. "I couldn't hear it."

Liese did so. "What can be the matter with him?" she said to herself. "I believe he's frightfully nervous, worse than I am."

"Johann, you're not in tune now," she said in despair, when he had tried again.

Then a gentleman came forward and took the violin from the child's hands. "Keep cool, my little man," he said kindly, as he twanged the strings, and turned the pegs to the proper point. "There is nothing to fear, if only you keep cool." Then he put the violin into Bonny's hands, and the little fellow moved to his music-stand ready to begin.

He turned his head round to Liese with a look of intense distress during the few bars she had to play before he began.

WEAK TIRED WOMEN How many women there are that get no refreshment from sleep. They wake in the morning and feel tired when they want to bed. They have a dizzy sensation in the head, the heart palpitates; they are irritable and nervous; weak and worn out; and the lightest household duties during the day seem to be a drag and a burden.

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Everyone saw the child's nervousness, and pitied him. His eyes were fixed on Liese's fingers for a few moments, and then he turned to the audience and began.

He now kept his eyes firmly on his music, and by the concentrated expression of his young face seemed to be bending all his energies to the task before him, and yet—Herr Hausmann could have torn his hair with rage and disappointment. The playing was correct as far as it went, but the exquisite tone, the delicate soft passages, the clear brilliancy that had so impressed him before—where were they?

It was not Liese's fault. She had done her part wonderfully well, even hiding mistakes of time that Bonny had made, by her own presence of mind. When the performance was ended it was Liese who received the lion's share of applause.

"Well my dear Herr, it is fair playing for a child," one of the critics said to Herr Hausmann, "but I see nothing about it to warrant an introduction to the public. He is a brave little fellow, and may do something yet."

"I tell you he can do then, twenty, a hundred times better than that. The child is frightened. He will get over it. Let him try again."

"By all means," the critic said, shrugging his shoulders. "I am ready to grant the facility of execution he displays, but I should say the musical ear was deficient."

Then others joined in, and there was a buzz of conversation.

Liese and Bonny were standing aside, awaiting the signal; Bonny frowning horribly and looking so fierce, that Liese did not like to tell him how badly he had played.

It was decided they were to try again. "Don't think of the people," Liese said kindly. "I forgot all about them; I was only thinking about you, Johann."

"You might have played a little louder."

"Why, Johann, you shouldn't have played so loudly yourself. It sounds so scrappy. You never play like that at home. I'd play just as you always do, if I were you. I'm sure they'd hear all right."

Bonny said nothing, only frowning a trifle more than he had been doing before. Once more he faced the audience and did his best, but this time he kept on taking furtive glances at the people. He knew he was not doing well, but he plodded on bravely until the end was reached, when he rushed from the platform to the welcome refuge of the artists' room, without waiting for applause or criticism.

"Sir," he said to Herr Hausmann, who came after him, "it is no good, I cannot play."

Herr Hausmann was furious at his disappointment. "Your father will then fulfil his engagement to me," he said, with an expression of countenance that made Bonny glare at him, although he had not heard the words.

"Liese," he exclaimed, when she joined him. "I cannot stay here; I must go home."

"But, Johann, that is not possible until to-morrow," Liese said.

"You needn't come, but I will go, I tell you. I am going to make them take me to the station."

Liese did not think he meant it, but only that he was cross and disappointed; but when she and Madame Hausmann were ready to go, Bonny had disappeared. "He was so bent on going home that I let him have his way," she told Liese. "I directed the servant who went with him to telegraph to your aunt to send to meet him."

This the servant carefully forgot, so when Bonny arrived at the little station he knew so well he found himself alone; but it was a relief to the poor child's pent-up feelings to tear along the familiar roads, even though it was dark, and he might well have been alarmed.

When at last he reached home he did not wait to explain to the astonished maid the mystery of his unexpected presence, but went straight upstairs to the professor's room.

Herr Bruder was sitting near the fire in a large invalid chair filled with soft pillows and blankets, and Bonny ran straight to him and threw himself down by his side, crying bitterly all the time.

"Herr Papa," he cried, in tones of distress. "I could not play a bit. I did try. It wasn't my fault. Something was wrong. I couldn't hear right."

"How did you get back, Johann?" Herr Bruder asked, scarcely heeding the child's rapid speech. Bonny did not reply. The Herr Papa repeated his question. Bonny lifted his drooping head and looked questioningly into the kind face.

"What did you say to me, Herr

Frank E. Donovan

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Papa?"

Again the question was asked. "Get back? Yes, I would come. I do not like Herr Hausmann, and I wanted you."

He had only heard vaguely after all. The truth flashed on Herr Bruder with an awful shock. Bonny had suddenly become deaf.

CHAPTER XVI.—BONNY'S FEARS REALIZED.

Bonny, looking intently at the professor's face, saw the expression that came suddenly into it.

"Herr Papa," he cried passionately, "you know I did try, don't you? I wanted to play more than anything, but it was like wool in my ears, and my little violin wouldn't speak at all. When I touched it softly no sound came from it."

"It was not the violin, my Johann," the Herr Papa said sadly; but Bonny did not hear a word. He seemed, however, to guess the professor's thoughts, for he went on rapidly, "You did tell me a long time ago, about a poor man whose ears were shut, that never heard his beautiful music any more. Are my ears shut too, Herr Papa?"

The distressed face Bonny was watching told its own tale. Bonny glanced round the room till his eyes rested on the professor's violin, which was never very far away from its owner. He jumped up and brought it to Herr Bruder.

"Play to me," he said abruptly. The professor took the instrument in his hand and played a few strains, Bonny all the while listening, with his head thrust forward and his brow wrinkled into a deep frown.

"Herr Papa," he cried suddenly, "I shall, I must, I will hear you play. I won't have my ears shut; I'll—I'll—"

The sentence ended in a sob of rage, and the next moment Bonny was rolling on the floor, beating the ground in one of his old fits of frenzy.

The whole scene was terribly distressing to the tender heart of the sick man, who made painful efforts to disentangle himself from the invalid chair, that he might soothe the passionate little creature. For a moment Bonny looked up and saw what he was doing. He jumped up and flew out of the room.

A touch of the bell brought Madame Bruder, who quickly discovered what had happened, and went in search of the child. It was a long time before she could soothe him sufficiently to divert his attention from himself to her. When she had done so she wrote down on a slate "Things that come quickly, go quickly. Herr Papa's good doctor will, perhaps, open Johann's ears quite easily."

This quieted him a little, and at last, worn out with all the terror and excitement of that day, he fell asleep in the little mother's arms. She had next to soothe and comfort her husband, whom she found greatly distressed and cast down. "It is my fault," he said, "to have rested content without having a doctor always to watch the child. The blow has come when I least looked to feel it, and the child's life is ended. The great genius that is in him will die without speaking. This is to break my heart."

"Ah, no," his wife said; "you are

quick. Wait to see what the doctors say. It may be a passing thing, and all will be well again."

"Heaven grant it," he replied; but he had not much hope, and for the rest of that evening and night his mind dwelt upon the sad future that lay before the passionate-hearted child.

So that next morning he was not so well, for the fever had again mounted high.

Bonny came to see him as soon as he was up, but was not allowed to stay, yet on the bed he had seen a letter which troubled him.

"Did Herr Hausmann write to Herr Papa?" he asked of Madame. Madame nodded. Bonny guessed quickly what Herr Hausmann wanted.

"Little mother, you will not let him say 'Yes' to that bad man, will you?"

Madame shook her head, but not very decidedly, for she knew that, gentle as the professor was, no one could turn him from what he considered to be a duty.

Bonny passed a miserable day. He was not allowed to be with Herr Bruder, and could not have much of Madame's society. The kind doctor came and looked at Bonny's ears, but he seemed perplexed, and advised Madame Bruder to consult without delay a special ear doctor in Berlin.

Liese came home and had to be told, and although she was, dreadfully sorry and very kind, her very sympathy made Bonny more cross and irritable, for his heart was full of anger and mortification, wanting only the slightest touch to make it blaze out again. And the next day the grand concert was to be given.

To Bonny's surprise he was prepared for a journey, and when he had on all his nicest clothes Madame and Liese came downstairs also dressed. Luggage was brought into the hall, and the carriage drove up to the door, and last of all there came down the stairs, leaning on the arm of Fritz, his attendant, the Herr Papa himself.

Bonny glanced swiftly at his face, which was not at all the laughing, happy face the children knew so well. Then when the professor had been tucked up with rugs and cushions in the carriage, Fritz brought the violin, and Bonny knew all.

His face was puckered into a dreadful frown the whole way along; but he said nothing. A railway carriage had been engaged for the party, and here again the professor was rolled up in rugs by the careful Fritz. Bonny curled himself upon the broad seat by the Herr Papa's side, and laid his head on one of the Papa's cushions, and there he remained the whole time, the frown never once departing from his forehead.

At the grand hotel to which they went a number of people had assembled to welcome the great player. Bonny watched with eager pride the enthusiastic way they pressed forward to greet him, although he could not hear a word that was said, but the child's eyes were continually fixed on the face of his friend with an intensity of watchfulness that many people noticed, saying to each other—

"He has an old thoughtful face, but how sad he looks, and he is wrapped up in his father."

To be Continued.