

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Getting Acquainted.

I got acquainted very quick
With Teddy Brown, when he
Moved in the house across the street,
The nearest one, you see.
I climbed and sat upon a post
To look, and so did he;
I stared and stared across him
And he stared back at me.
I hoped he wanted me to speak,
I thought I'd try and see.
I said, "Hello!" to Teddy Brown;
He said "Hello!" to me.

—St. Nicholas.

FRITZ.

Outside the great block of "Model Dwellings" the rain poured and poured and in the forsaken street, and the wind came wailing and sobbing by, so that the ruddy gleams which the street-lamps threw across the wet pavements wavered as they fell. In the small sitting-room of one of the topmost flats the firelight flickered over the walls and softened the hard outlines of the shanty furniture with a radiant edging. It threw into sombre relief the figure of a man who sat doubled up dejectedly, in front of the hearth, shuddering convulsively from time to time. His head was laid against a queer fluffly bundle which he held strained to him as if he feared some one was going to snatch it away. It was all he had left in the world, that soft, little bundle—Fritz.

By and by he lifted up his face, a careworn, middle-aged face, and peered with short-sighted brown eyes at the downy, little, fair head of the baby. But tiny Fritz slept on, all unconscious of the bitterness that was flooding his father's spirit.

And it was a cruel blow which had befallen poor Ritter. He had toiled so long and so patiently to make a home for the bright-haired orphan girl whom he had loved during nearly half her lifetime. And now he had lost her after their one short, sweet year of happiness together. She had been devoted to him and to their little home. She had tried to enter into all her husband's tastes and striven wistfully to understand his music, and knitted contentedly through the concert to which he used to take her. She had done her best to prevent her fragile, sunny face from showing the relief she felt when she said he was afraid she was unequal to the fatigue of any more concert going. And Ritter, on his part, had never told his wife of the many musical treats he gave up to stay at home with her.

And then the baby came, and she had lain in a quiet ecstasy and watched him day after day. But her strength never seemed to come back to her. Though she got up and sat by the fire with the child in her lap, she was not able to go to church when he was baptised Friedrich, after his German grandfather, or even to hold him for very long at a time.

The bright little wife of the board-school teacher who lived downstairs was very kind, and used often to come and sit with the invalid and help to wash and dress Fritz. One day when the doctor was going away after what he called "a complimentary visit to the baby," he asked at what hour Mr. Ritter was usually in. Something in his voice made the board-school teacher's wife follow him when he left the room, and she came back with her blue eyes dim. "No stamina," the doctor said, "and no rallying power."

So the young mother just faded quietly away, and on this dreary afternoon her husband had laid her in the chill, beautifully-kept cemetery, and had come back to his lonely room in a sort of stupor of grief and despair. The board-school teacher's wife had tidied the room, and directed the operations of the shipshod char-woman, and got tea ready, and fed little Fritz, crying all the time like the sympathetic, sweet-natured soul that she was. When poor Ritter stumbled wearily in, she prepared to lay the sleeping baby in his cradle. But the father held out his arms for the child with his hungry yearning in his eyes that the good Samaritan was quite overpowered. And she rushed down to her husband and her sturdy boy, in such a flood of tears and with such incoherent queries as to what they would do if Jack was only two months old and she was dead, that the good board-school teacher was quite bewildered and could not think of a suitable answer to make.

From that day forward Fritz was his father's supreme joy. He spent his early babyhood with the aunt of the board-school teacher's wife, a motherly being who lived in the next street, and was glad to add to her slender means. Every day, both going to and coming from the obscure office where he earned his humble pittance, Ritter called to see his son. And as soon as Fritz was able to toddle, his father took him home with him each evening and learned to look after the child in a tender, albeit "mannish" way, that quite excited the ladies in the dwellings. "I suppose it's 'arpin' continual at that there old fiddle as makes 'im that 'e ain't so clumsy as other men, God 'elp 'em," said the board-school teacher's wife's aunt, who, I grieve to say, mismanaged her native language and was untouched by the higher culture.

When he grew a little bigger, Fritz went every morning to a kindergarten with the board-school teacher's Jack, and played down stairs with his small school-fellow till Ritter came home in the evenings. Then followed the happiest time in the whole day for Fritz, when he had "Daddy," all to himself. In warm weather he went with Daddy for a walk; in cold weather he sat on Daddy's knee by the fire. And Daddy never was cross with him, and never seemed to get tired of reading to him, and playing with him, and answering

him innumerable questions. And when the glorious bedtime romp was over and the candle was put out and he was tucked up in bed, Daddy always left the door open till he was quite asleep, so that the last thing he saw was a band of light from the sitting-room lamp slanting along the wall at his feet.

There came a memorable evening when Fritz was seven years old, on which Ritter, returning from his office, was surprised to find neither of the boys waiting for him on the stairs. The board-school teacher's wife explained with a very long face that they had both transgressed mightily. Jack had been whipped and put to bed, and Fritz was in bed, too, awaiting chastisement. This she strongly advised his father to administer for the sake of law and order. Ritter ascended the stairs with a heavy heart. When he went into the bedroom, Fritz was sitting on the pillow with his rumpled, fair head held very much aloft, and his sensitive little face set and colorless. "I ain't a bit afraid," he said defiantly. "You can lick me if you like. I don't care." Poor Ritter was cruelly torn, but justice and discipline carried the day.

Fritz took the slight chastigation, which to him seemed so very awful, in silence; but a strange tightening came about his childish soul. "Daddy evidently didn't love him any more or he wouldn't hurt him, so after this he would be as naughty as ever he liked." But then such a strange thing happened that Fritz never forgot it. His father gathered him up in his arms and carried him in to the fire; and he held him closer than he ever held him before, and he said in a queer shaky voice: "Do you know, Fritz, if you ever oblige Daddy to punish you like that again, I think I will break his heart."

And Fritz hid his face against Daddy's sleeve and burst out crying. And oh, wonder of wonders, Daddy, yes, great grown-up Daddy, cried too. That night, after Fritz was asleep, Ritter forgot, for the first time, to shut the doors before he took down his violin. He played very well for an almost self-taught amateur, and the episode which had just lent a fresh fire to his performances. Suddenly he became conscious of a little white figure standing before him tremulous with excitement, and of a pair of shining eyes fixed upon his face. With a sort of fearful joy he went on playing. Could it be possible that the child had inherited his father's love of music after all? And then Fritz seized him by the knees. "Oh, Daddy, Daddy," he said with passionate eagerness, "please, please let me do that too."

II.

So Ritter began teaching little Fritz music, and the child devoted himself to his new pursuit with loving earnestness. All the money that his father could scrape together by pinching and saving, working hard, and living hard, was put aside with the mothers' little portion towards giving Fritz a musical education. As soon as he was old enough he entered the academy and studied hard there, winning prize after prize. At the students' concerts the peculiarly delicate, pure notes, which the clever-faced, slim lad seemed to spirit from the strings of his violin, drew upon him the notice of critics; and his father in the front row had several intensely blissful moments when one and another would prophesy in his hearing "a future for that little Ritter."

Ritter, the elder, however, had formed the grand project of sending his son to Germany, that the genius which Fritz undoubtedly possessed might be developed in the best way; and when the boy was seventeen the scheme became feasible. It was a terrible wrench to both to part for such a long time. Ritter apparently never faltered, but Fritz was almost tempted to relinquish his cherished dream when at the last moment he saw his father's face drawn and his hands twitching nervously with the agony he could not hide.

He wrote to his father, with unfeigned regularity, bright, clever letters; and as time went on, the report of his progress became more and more brilliant. His father lived in his successes, and struggled valiantly in the face of poverty and increasing years to send him money. As far as his musical education was concerned however, Fritz was soon independent of pecuniary assistance; and as for living, he denied himself in every possible way. He used to think of and long for the time when he should be able to make a home for his father, who would have no uncongenial work to do in those future happy days, but as much music as he wanted, and everything his heart desired; and Fritz would earn it all.

At last the long separation was nearly over. In the London squares the lilacs and laburnums and pink and white hawthorns were in blossom, and baskets of spring flowers made the dingy streets gay. When the leaves began to turn and the berries to ripen in golden October, Fritz was coming home.

When Ritter arrived at his office on a bright May morning, his chief sent for him and told him, not unkindly, that he had ceased to require his services. He was getting past his work, and a younger and more enterprising man was coming in his place. Poor Ritter felt quite stunned by the news. He had worked in that dark little office for so many, many years, and now where was he to turn for employment at his age and with his old-fashioned methods? In outward appearance he was little altered. His hair was somewhat thinner and greyer; his tall figure somewhat more stooped; his brown eyes rather dim-

mer—that was all. He determined he would not tell Fritz of his misfortune, it might unsettle the lad. Besides, he had a little money left, and perhaps after all he would get something to do before October.

So he strove heroically to find employment; but week after week went by, and in his search he was unrewarded. Day by day, as he gradually lost hope, the eternal fruitless answering of advertisements became more keenly painful. Day by day the terrible anxiety grew and grew, and the nameless dread pressed more and more heavily in upon his soul.

And yet there was a bright speck upon the dark horizon. Fritz was coming, and each of the wretched days brought him a little closer. It was this one ray of certain happiness that alone kept Ritter from succumbing to the despair that threatened to overwhelm him in his utter weariness of mind and body.

At last the eve of Fritz's arrival came. Poor Ritter almost forgot his troubles; and, when the overpowering recollection of them rushed back upon him, it was mingled with the thought: "To-morrow Fritz will be here, and together we shall somehow weather the storm."

The postman ran whistling up the steps, and put a letter in the letter-box. The envelope was addressed in a strange handwriting. Ritter tore it open in a panic—what if it should be anything about Fritz! But no. He had to read the letter twice before he could grasp the contents. However, there was no mistake; it was from a gentleman whose advertisement for some one to keep his accounts and write his business letters Ritter had answered, and it requested him to call on the writer in the course of the next afternoon.

The morrow came blue and bright with a keen October crispness in the air. Ritter spent the early part of the day in small preparations for Fritz. He went to and fro with slow feet that were strangely tired, trying to supplement the exertions of the charwoman who sniffed contemptuously under her inevitable crape bonnet as she scrubbed. He ordered a little supper from the eating-house across the way, for though he was near the end of his resources he could not let anything mar Fritz's first evening at home. And several times during the long, clear morning he wandered into the bedroom, just for the pleasure of seeing the little bed in the corner where Fritz had always slept, standing ready to receive its owner again.

At 3 o'clock he went out. When he reached his destination in the West End, he was shown into a luxurious library where a dilettante aristocratic-looking man plied him with innumerable questions. Ritter answered his queries with dignified patience. But an uncontrollable wistfulness in his whole attitude betrayed the anxiety with which he awaited the final decision of his interlocutor. It chanced that the latter looked up in the middle of a selfish mental calculation and caught the troubled expression in Ritter's eyes; and with one of the few generous impulses he had ever known, he said: "Well, well, I daresay we shall suit each other, and we had better not quarrel about the money. You may call round to-morrow, Mr. Ritter."

Oh the relief of having found some thing to do! Ritter felt as if he had got into harbor after having tossed all night on a stormy sea.

When the heavy hall door closed behind him and he started on his homeward journey, he became conscious, for the first time, that he had eaten nothing all day. Well, it did not matter now, he and Fritz would have supper together by and by. Mechanically he treaded his way through the crowded streets. The roar of the traffic fell unheeded on his ears, for his thoughts were far away. He was listening to the glorious music of a full orchestra. All about him the rich strains thrummed and swelled, rising and falling in rhythmic cadences. And clear and high through it all sounded the pure, passionate notes of the first violin—Fritz, his Fritz!

The way home seemed endless, and his steps grew slower and slower, as the fictions strength born of relief ebbed from him; but at last he reached the dwellings and toiled wearily up the stairs. He would lie on his bed a little while; it would never do to be tired when Fritz came. The clean, bare room was all flooded full of golden sunset light. It was pleasant, Ritter dimly felt, to lie there in a sort of dreary languor, always with his short-sighted eyes turned towards the little bed in the corner. And still that exquisite music thrilled and thrummed, and soared sobbing up and up; and ever it grew more subtly sweet, but fainter, and fainter, and fainter, till it vibrated no more through the peaceful radiance of his dream.

Up the stairs, three steps at a time, dashed Fritz, the same earnest-faced, slim Fritz as of old. He opened the door—how well he knew the trick of the latch!—and flung down his slender luggage. "Father!" he called, "Father!" But there was no answer.

He ran impatiently into the bedroom, and then a smile dawned upon his face. The idea of his dear old Dad being fast asleep like that at such a moment! He walked gently to the bed. "Daddy," he said aloud in the old childish fashion; and then he stooped down in a shamefaced way, and laid his hand upon Ritter's long fingers. Alas, poor Fritz! In that supreme moment of horror and anguish, he realized that his father lay before him in the gathering twilight—dead.—*Frances Wynne.*

Minard's Liniment cures Colds, etc.

A RECKLESS CENTURY.

Irish Rakes and Duellists—The Hellfire Club of Dublin.

W. B. Yates in United Ireland.

On the top of Mount Pelier, one of the Dublin hills, stands the Hellfire Club, upon its stone roof a few tufts of grass resembling hair, and in its front dark openings reminding one of sightless eyes—the whole like a grinning skull, hideous symbol of an age without responsibility, without order, without peace. About it the winds howl unceasingly, as though they keened for a violence that was as theirs is, for an age in whose unbridled life was something elemental, something of the winds and floods. Their neighborhood still mutters with tales of deeds done within their gray walls. Here the devil came often, the story is, and feasted among those eighteenth-century worshippers of his, leaving on one notable night his hoof mark on the hearthstone; here a number of the gentry of Ireland were wont to drink to the toast "May we be all damned," and to go through the ceremony of the Mass with obscene accompaniments; and here, to show their contempt for that eternal flame thought to be their lot, did they set fire to the building in a drunken spree, and sit on mocking the flames until they were driven out half stifled. Murders too, the peasants will have it, were not unknown; and now a hundred years after the last of its frequenters has brawled himself into the grave it is haunted, the tale goes, by drunken phantoms, who feast and gamble, with their master in the midst of them. For all this copious tradition not much is known for certainty of this Hellfire Club. There is something in Walsh, the anonymous author of "Ireland Sixty Years ago"—something in Barrington, something in old magazines, and something in popular tradition; but it is not much at best, and little reliable. We know more of the "Cherokees," whose iniquitous rules and regulations have been preserved by a contemporary writer. No man was eligible for membership unless he gave clear evidence of a debauched life, and no man could be persuaded until he could swear to having killed his man in a duel. This club became a terror to Dublin, and had many encounters with the authorities.

BEATING THEM ON EVERY OCCASION. It was wont to march through the streets dressed as a military corps, and no power was found to cope with it. There were also the "Hawkabirds," the "Sweaters" and the "Pinkindies," who took an inch or so off the point of their scabbards, and went about prodding people out of sheer high spirits, and now and then killing a barber or two who had made them late for ball or dinner party by not turning up in time to powder and pomatum their empty heads. Sometimes they would stand at cross roads, notably at the college end of Dame street, and prod the passers-by.

The wild passion for duelling that passed through the country in that age is somewhat more worthy of sympathy. The destruction of the national forces at the battle of the Boyne had filled the land with Catholic gentlemen who had no defence against insult but their own unaided swords, and from their contests with their supplanters spread through the country a habit of fighting for anything and everything. Men lived for it, and pistol practice became a consuming passion. Swaggering swashbucklers though they were, they did after all hold their lives lightly and risk them for a song. A little conviction would have made them good rebels. We hear of a certain Fitzgerald fighting a duel across a table, and when his opponent's pistol missed fire going over and priming it himself, and then returning to his place to receive the shot; nor can one help giving sympathy to Power of Darlagh, when two Englishmen at an English inn bribed the waiters to give him for dinner, in mockery of his nationality, a dish of potatoes, and he replied by eating the potatoes, and then having served two dishes, one for himself and one for the Englishmen, which proved when the covers were lifted to contain pistols. Nor do we sympathize less because the Englishmen, much shocked at the notion of anything so foolish and Irish as a duel, fled hurriedly from the room leaving an unsettled bill which Power of Darlagh paid charitably. The braggadocio of Brian Maguire—huge, whiskered bully that he was—standing at a narrow crossing and

DARING THE PASSERS-BY

to jostle him, is not so pleasant an object even though his skill was so great that he always rang his bell with a bullet and could snuff a candle held in his wife's hand with a pistol shot; nor does the statement of a certain contemporary pamphleteer that his ancestors were once Kings in Ireland, but that "the infamous invader had been impoverishing Mr. Maguire for centuries," make us feel any the more anxious to see his like again.

This reckless and turbulent spirit was by no means confined to the upper classes, but spread to the shopkeepers and artisans to a considerable extent. Poor men, when condemned to death, would spend the night before their hanging gambling upon the lids of their own coffins, making amends for a life without dignity by a death without fear. During the early part of the eighteenth century the nation had little or no sense of national duty and public responsibility; the proper chiefs of the people were dead or exiled with foreign armies, the bards had passed away—the last bardic college came to an end in 1680—and the ballad makers had only just begun to take their place. The Anglo-Irish gentry who

had succeeded to the defeated chiefs held allegiance only to England, and were responsible to no man. They had not yet awakened to the temporary patriotism of the Volunteer movement, nor listened as yet to the terrible railway of Swift. The contemporary life of England was reckless enough, but its recklessness, never at all equal to that of Ireland, was tempered by some sense of public welfare. The gentry of Ireland thought only to eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow might come rebellion and confiscation. Almost the only sense of national duty was, for long, among the poor. They were driven to their excesses often enough by patriotic hope. With what different feelings do we look back at the irresponsible turbulence of the gentry and at that storm of popular indignation when the mob attacked the Parliament House and made the members swear truth to Ireland one after another, and then, to show their contempt of England, set an old woman with a pipe in her mouth upon

THE THRONE OF THE VICEROY.

Such were the thoughts and stories brought to my mind the other day by that grinning skull on Mount Pelier. All the four winds of heaven seemed to be howling at once upon the green hilltop, and telling to each other tales of forgotten violence and dead recklessness. What message of hope did they bring me? What judgment are we to pronounce upon that eighteenth century? What should it make us expect from the future? I find nothing but fortunate prophecies in that dead century. I see there the Celtic intensity, the Celtic fire, the Celtic daring wasting themselves, it is true, in all kinds of evil, but needing only the responsibility of self-government and the restraint of a trained public opinion to have labored devotedly for the public weal. The vast energy that filled Ireland with bullies and swashbucklers will some day give us great poets and thinkers. It is better to be violent and irresponsible than full of body worship and money grubbing. The duellist, Whyley, going off for a bet to play ball against the ramparts of Jerusalem is a nobler sight than the railway king putting his millions together. Those eighteenth-century duellists, at any rate, tried to really live, and not merely exist. They took their lives into their hands and went through the world with a song upon their lips; and if a curse was mingled with the song they are none the less better to think of than had they grown rich and much esteemed, and yet lasted on no more than half alive, toadstools upon the state. The energy that filled them is still in our veins, but working now for public good. If a man or a people have energy all is well with them, and if they use it for ill to-day they will turn it to good to-morrow. When the devil is converted, goes the old proverb, he will be the first of the sons of God. If the sword be strong it will make so much the better ploughshare when the day of peace is at hand. Their swords were strong, at any rate, though they were not turned often enough, or persistently enough, towards the enemies of their country.

Balfour's Souperism.

A generation ago, says William O'Brien, some simple-minded folk in England used to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on the brilliant project of bribing "Popery" out of Connemara whenever the potato blight left the hungry little Papists open to the arguments of soup and blankets. The potatoes having failed last year, Mr. Balfour took up the derelict work of the Irish Church missions, and invested hundreds of thousands of the British taxpayers' money in a scheme of political souperism amongst the distressed peasants of the West. I heartily congratulate the poor people upon whatever little profits will have trickled into their pockets out of Connemara railways, roads, tinkering, and the like "relief works." I would even thankfully acknowledge Mr. Balfour's liberality with the British taxpayers' alms in these poor regions if he had not been guilty of the meanness of refusing to spend a pound in any district that did not present him with a dutiful address, or help the local sergeant of police to erect a triumphal arch in his honor. But as a measure for the conversion of Connemara from the Nationalist heresy, his expenditures have as little to show for themselves as the former settlements of the Irish Church Mission folk. Now that the harvest has come, and a laughing family of potatoes answers to every stroke of the spade, it is safe to say that Mr. Balfour's agents could not scrape together among the peasantry of any Parliamentary division along the distressed Western seaboard even so many as the ten signatures that would be necessary to fill a Tory candidate's nomination paper. Whether he bribes in the west or coerces in the south, to that complexion has Tory rule in Ireland come after five years of swaggering words and evil deeds.

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