

Our Boys and Girls

BY AUNT BECKY

THE BIRTHDAY CAKE.

What does it take to make the birthday cake? "Sugar and spice and everything nice" And snow-white frosting as smooth as ice And little pink candles all round the edge. Oh, who wouldn't like a generous wedge Of the wonderful birthday cake? How many candles all alight Must stand on the cake to make it right. To make it a regular birthday cake? Two of pink and two of blue And one little shining white one, too, Right on the beautiful tip top Of the wonderful birthday cake!

Whom does it take to eat this cake? Father and mother and Grandma Gray And Robbie and Rosie and Eleanor May And the dear little girl next door, And a piece for teacher in basket small And a piece for Norah—I think that's all Who eat the birthday cake.

There's a little gold ring inside the cake, And strange to say, it is Eleanor May, Who wins the piece with its golden prize, For Eleanor May is five to-day, And the birthday cake with its little surprise Was made and trimmed by Grandmother Gray— The beautiful birthday cake! —Youth's Companion.

LITTLE PICKLE'S TREAT.

The Burns children lived in Sunny Terrace. Before their father failed in business they lived in a big house with lawns and gardens. Now the sidewalk was their playground, and they hobnobbed with every child in the neighborhood.

Bell, or "Little Pickle," was a born leader even of the boys. She was afraid of nothing; into every mischief; active in every quarrel; ready to fight for her friends and protect the weak; a scorner of stunts and pretenses; deserting the well-dressed for the shabbiest in the street, if once she had called them friends.

At the end of the block lived a family called "Showey," the wealthiest in the street; but instead of being thankful that they had so many nice things, it only served to make them vain and proud, and sometimes—I am sorry to say—rude and unkind.

HER WILFUL WAY.

By the Author of "Dolly's Golden Slippers," "Claimed at Last," etc.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"Oh! Miss Olive, what are you doing?" It was Jane, the housemaid, who peeped in upon her this time. "Only saving Miss Bush trouble," she said. "Roll wanted trimming, and I am doing it." "I think Miss Bush will be very angry," returned Jane. "She is never angry with me," said the confident child, snipping all the faster in her self-will. "More reason for you trying to please her, miss," observed Jane; and she went and called Nancy. Nancy came, and took away the scissors, but no sooner had she turned al her back than the incorrigible girl went again to Miss Bush's basket, and found another pair and finished her mischievous work.

At this point Miss Bush and Guy stepped upon the terrace, returned from their walk. Oh! a grotesque creature Rolf looked, as he bounded out through the open window to meet his mistress as was his wont. No wonder Miss Bush did not know him, and screamed, and struck him back with her sunshade, as he stretched up for a caress, nor that Guy thought him some strange animal.

"Why, it's your poor old Rolf, Miss Bush," said the boy. "Yes, Rolf." How gratefully he licked the little hand caressing him, and how he whined and barked out his pleasure when Miss Bush patted him, though shivering, meanwhile, and shaking himself, as if he did not feel quite as he ought to feel.

"Haven't I made him lovely?" said the audacious child, lying on her side again as the two stepped in, the dog with them. "You've made him ugly, and done a cruel, ungrateful thing; you've been cruel to the dog and ungrateful to me."

Miss Bush turned up the piquant face and kissed it, an unreadable something depicted on her countenance. Why was she so patient with her? Why had she taken this strange child to her heart and home, as she had done? The kind lady rang the bell and Jane appeared.

She was lonely, too, and gazed wistfully at the others at their play. At last her doctor told her mother that it would do her good to run around, so she joined the children in their games, becoming Bell's greatest admirer.

When any of the terrace children gave a party, Lily Showey was always invited, and enjoyed herself with the rest. On Lily's birthday she had some little visitors even grander than herself. Dressed very prettily, they came out with their dolls.

"Little Pickle" and her friends drew near to admire, but Lily was ashamed of her every-day companions because they were untidy, and tossed her head and would not speak. There was no more fun now, but discontent and envy and sad little hearts.

"Never mind!" cried Bell. "Some day I'll have a party and we'll see." After tea the children were made more unhappy by seeing "the party" eating ice cream on the steps. Someone called Bell just then, and she ran into the house.

"Hurrah!" she shouted, coming back, dancing and laughing. "Two dollars from my god-mother! Now, we'll see!"

Into the brilliantly-lighted rooms of "Connell's restaurant" half an hour later—where silks rustled and gems sparkled—into this scene of beauty marched a motley crowd—half soiled dresses, hatless heads and towseled, hair smudgy faces and grimy fingers but joy and delight on every countenance.

At the head marched Bell, triumphantly—eyes shining, cheeks rosy red, brown curls flying—followed by four little sisters and five little playmates; totalling Tommy last of all.

Not one whit abashed nor awed were they by the grandeur—no, indeed. For were they not following their leader, Bell, and did she not know best? Bell seated her guests and gave her orders. Presently, pink ice cream was slipping down ten thirsty little throats, and fancy cakes were being generously distributed.

Bell was happy—blissfully happy—that she had given a treat, perfectly certain that it had been enjoyed. Only—when bedtime came—she whispered to her mother, "Only—mother—I'm sorry now that Lily wasn't in; 'cos she'd have loved it so."

JUST A COMMON LITTLE BOY.

Just a common little boy! Like to other boys, mayhap; Comes and cuddles at the sleep-hour In my lap.

Yet I own, with arms around him, All the wealth of mother-joys: Like to mothers of all common Little boys.

—Cora A. Matson Dolson, in Tom Watson's Magazine.

your own?—I should think not, Master Guy," and he drew the boy to him with a great hug. "But how about the little lady, ma'am?" he inquired of Miss Bush. "She will be ready," said Miss Bush, sighing over the words as if they made her sad. Ah! had she but known what was even then transpiring.

Olive's room was on the ground floor, looking out among the shrubs and flowers, at the back of the house—a pretty bowery place it was, as was also Miss Bush's bedroom, into which it opened. Left alone, after her kind hostess was gone, the naughty child crept from her little white nest of a bed to sit a white shadow by the window from sheer perversity, and see the day die among the tall autumn flowers. Nay, she opened the window; as she did so, room came a little black-haired girl a few years older than herself, from among the bushes.

"Buy a lace, my lady, buy a lace?" she whined, halting at the window and holding out her wares for the child's inspection. "I don't want a lace, but I should like to talk to you," said the naughty child.

"May I walk in?" asked the little girl. "Yes." It was quite an adventure to have this strange girl talking to her, coming into her room, and she supposed to be in bed and asleep. In crept Bess with her basket on tip-toe.

"Oh, you are fortunate!" cried the young gypsy, giving a sweeping glance around the pretty chamber, draped with white. "No, I'm not, if you mean this is a nicer room than I've ever had before. I always sleep in a room like this."

"Oh, my! And is the lady's room you're staying with as pretty as this?" "Of course it is." "May I see it?"

Oh, Olive, what will you say to this—what ought you say—what will you wish in the days to come that you had said? Well, this is really what she did answer: "Yes," and walked barefooted across the room, and opened the door leading into Miss Bush's chamber. Here she found Nancy making all ready for her mistress's comfort for the night.

"Miss Olive, what have you got there?" cried the old servant in astonishment, as the two stood in the doorway. "I'm only showing this girl the house," returned the mite, with assurance.

"Best show her the door, Miss Olive; I'll have no strange girls cumbering my mistress's house. Now little girl, go; and don't come here again," said Nancy, leading the way to Olive's open window. Then she stood and watched Bess pass through the shrubs and flowers to the gate, locking it behind her, and then returned to the little lady, perched again by the window.

"Miss Olive, do you know that's how thieves have been tempted into houses?" said she severely. "Not into this house," was the answer.

"How do you know? She may be a spy sent to spy out the land, for others to come and do the work," replied Nancy, shutting the window; and, making the child get into bed, she sat down by her side till she fell asleep.

"Olive, the Pretty Sally is come in, and will take you and Guy home in two days," was the good news Miss Bush brought her the next morning, coming through the door between their room as Jane dressed her, all ready for breakfast.

"Oh, I'm so glad." "Yes, dear, it will be very pleasant for you to go sailing home, but—"

"But what, Miss Bush?" "I shall miss you." The dark-eyed little girl scanned her face. "You'll not be sorry?" she said. "I shall, Olive; I've learnt to love you." She did not say that a latent love had lain in her heart for years, waiting to be poured out and lavished upon her, but she thought it better than Guy? There was a ring of proud exultation in the child's voice, which made Miss Bush sigh again.

"Yes, better than Guy; although Guy deserves to be loved best," was what she answered. "I deserve to be loved best; I'd not care to be loved at all if I didn't deserve it."

To this Miss Bush made no reply, but after breakfast took up the dropped thread of their talk, as it were, and asked Olive, "Do you know the secret of being loved, Olive, and of deserving it?" "I suppose it is by trying to please people."

"It is not by pleasing self, dear. My little girl, Nancy told me what an unwise thing you did yesterday evening, to say nothing of the liberty you were taking in letting a stranger into a house not your own home."

"You said I ought to be courteous to people no so well off as myself, Miss Bush, when I was rude to Liz, and I was courteous," returned the child, using a hard word and understanding it. "No, Olive, that was not courtesy; on the contrary, it was discourtesy to me, and intrusive to take a gypsy child to my chamber."

"You never find fault with Guy," said the perverse child. But Miss Bush only replied, "Oh, Olive!" and took her into her arms and kissed her.

But who shall say what a day may bring forth under cover of its veiling darkness? This is what befell at Beach Cottage: that night the house was robbed and Olive stolen from her bed.

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CHAPTER X.—THE GYPSY CAMP —THE RUN FOR FREEDOM —MISS BUSH'S SECRET.

The Pretty Sally stood in the little cove of a bay, ready to go out with the tide, now on the turn. Jim was there, Miss Bush was there, all the little Rances were there with their mother, under the star-light and afterglow commingling to see the little bark go out with Guy on board. No tidings had been heard of Olive; the policemen were at work, that was all. Now Jim had put out from them in a boat, now the Pretty Sally was under weigh, now she was gliding, gliding, now she was gliding, gliding; Heaven speed you on your way.

It was a dreary walk home; nay, Miss Bush did not go to Beach Cottage after she parted with the Rances, but paced to and fro on the all but deserted shore—a lonely, moving shadow under the starlight. And as she paced a little lurking shadow stole up to her, a little hand was laid upon her arm—a child's hand, with a cautious "Hush!" whispered low. It was Bess, the gipsy girl.

"Are ye lookin' for the little lady?" she inquired. "Yes; but who are you? and do you know where she is?" "I am Bess the gipsy, and I do know where she is."

The girl laid her finger on her lip, even under the dim starlight, and in the solitude of the long stretch of silent shore. Only a few words she whispered in her ear, but Miss Bush gave a low moan, which the gipsy child tried to hush by laying her little hand over her lips.

"Oh, my lady, don't! 'twould cost me my life if 'twere known I told you—but it's true."

"Is there no other way?" inquired Miss Bush, and the child made answer, "No, no other way; you must come to the camp."

She linked her little hand into Miss Bush's arm, and drew her on, away from the great solemn sea, by a winding road, leading to the almost equally solemn downs: so vast, lonely and eerie were they, under the dim starlight shadows.

On, on, to where a clump of trees broke the sameness of the wide expanse, and stood out against the dark midnight sky. Here, under cover of the trees, was the gipsy camp.

"Tread light, lady, light as a cat," said Bess to Miss Bush, though leading her at a safe distance from all, and making for the sheltering trees. Once in their deeper shadow, the girl loosened her hold of the lady's hand, whispering the one word, "Look!" pointing with her finger toward the door of the tent.

There, just within, revealed as it were by the glimmer of the fire, lay poor little Olive between two ill-visaged women, bound hand and foot: a small pitiful captive, and fast asleep, as from very exhaustion and misery. Miss Bush would have moaned aloud, but the girl said "Hush!" and glided away in silence.

The hush of sleep lay over all, the trees waved above their heads, the wind whispered, the stars looked down; Miss Bush's heart failed her, waiting and watching. Why had she been led into this by that brave, adventurous mite of a gipsy child? Why not have gone to the police and let them come and claim the wee prisoner by dint of might and right?

More stealthily than a cat the girl made her way zig-zag among the sleeping men to the tent door; she was bending over the small slumbering Olive, and cutting the bonds which bound her legs—poor little legs that could not have carried her far had they been free. Now she paused and glanced at the two sleeping ill-looking women, one on either side, like very jailors—they never stirred. She laid one hand on the child's arm, another on her mouth, whispering, as the wind whisp—

"Wake, little lady," loosening her bound hands as by magic, and the sleeper awoke.

She would have screamed, perhaps, but that Bess's hand was pressed over her mouth. "Hush!" she hissed; "lis I, Bess! your lady is waiting—come!"

With the docility born of hope, fear, all that would sway the mind of a child in such a terrible situation, the little girl rose to her feet. Bess led her here and there, stepping over the sleeping men once and again with startled, uncertain, yet clever steps, and anon they were free of them all. They were among the sheltering trees, Olive was pressed in Miss Bush's arms, but they were not safe.

"Run, run for your lives—for my life!" pleaded Bess; and Miss Bush realized sadly that she could not run, especially in the entangling darkness, that poor little Olive could not run, that they were lost. For a dog began to bark; he would noise the camp; the supreme moment was come.

But Bess was equal to the occasion; she caught up Olive in her arms and fled. Miss Bush followed as on wings of terror. Not far did they go ere their strength was spent; three huddled up shadows they stood on the downs a moment to take breath. Oh, the monsters! they had sent the dog after them; they could hear his snoring breath, see his gleaming eyes; ay, and another came, as if to hem them in, another pair of fiery eyes, the snoring breath, the growl of defiance of some other animal—they were beset behind and before. But oh! the joy! the newcomer was Rolf, faithful Rolf.

(To be continued.) The last issue of the Syracuse Catholic Sun is a most worthy number, consisting of 28 pages. The special portion is devoted to "The Church and Socialism." The question is handled by writers of note, and the number withal is deserving of much praise.

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