

# Boys and Girls.

## [For the 'Northern Messenger.' The Castle of Dipso in the Land of the Stulti.

By John Underhill.

(Continued.)

I will pass over in a hurried manner that period from boyhood to youth or rather budding manhood. My parents' control became gradually less and less every day; my sister's influence dwindled and our mutual confidences weakened; my sylvan path became completely neglected; my school-days drew to a close; my companions had grown older and, like myself, more worldly; the highway was known to me from end to end, and every one I met, had a bow or a 'good-day' for 'Jolly Jack'—for such was my nickname amongst all the people of the country side. Old Peter Martin, my school-companion's uncle, the Castle waiter, had allowed me, once or twice, to catch a glimpse of the interior of the large hall and to look at the frescoes on the roof of the rotunda, but it was always when the visitors were away, or when some particular event—a race or a boxing-match—called the habitués of the castle to other scenes of enjoyment. But time, that waits for no one, flew past on regular wing, and I was becoming a man. My companion, my old school friend, Andy Martin, had already learned to smoke—but he was my senior by two years; he had even gone with some sporting men to the Castle, and he related to me with an expression of flushed wonder and overflowing enthusiasm all the scenes he had witnessed and the enjoyments he experienced. My old curiosity now found a worthy associate in my new-born ambition, and a little spite of envy stirred them both into action—and they both led in the direction of the Castle. Of course, my headquarters were still at home, and there I was to be found every night. I had not as yet tasted of any of those vices which the world calls 'youthful habits,' nor had I commenced that very anti-agricultural work of 'sowing wild oats.' Still my indulgent and watchful parents seemed to dread for my future. They were kindness itself, my sister was the essence of pure devotion to me, and I even began to take a more than brotherly interest in a young lady—her name was Alice—a refined, noble-minded, high-souled, good girl; and she, I think, took more than a sisterly interest in me. The few evenings ever spent away from home were passed in her society and that of her relatives. Everything went smoothly enough on the surface. I was almost out of my apprenticeship, and I was considered by everyone to be a clever boy, a good-natured fellow, a jolly companion, and the makings of a good man. My every little progress was watched with pride and interest by my parents, sister, Alice and all. But there ever flowed that undercurrent which I felt irresistibly whirling me on towards the mysterious arcana of yonder gorgeous palace. My great ambition was to become known to its votaries, to become a hero amongst them, to enjoy even boasted pleasures that Andy constantly paraded before my heated imagination. 'Where there is a will there is a way,' both to good and to evil; and I soon found an entrance to the 'upper ten' (as I called them then), of our little world. The hour was at hand, and I was only too ready to seize upon the opportunity.

### II.

'Ah! little they know of true happiness,  
They whom satiety fills;  
Who, flung on the rich breast of luxury,  
Eat of the rankness that kills!

Ah! little they know of the blessedness  
Toil-purchased slumber enjoys,  
Who, stretched on the hard rack of indolence,  
Taste of the sleep that destroys!

D. F. McCarthy.

'Where are you off to this afternoon?' asked Andy, one day as I met him on the highway about a mile from our own gate.

'No place in particular,' I replied.

'I thought,' said he, 'that you might be going down to old Dickson's; those blue eyes of little Alice his daughter seem to have a great attraction for you, Jack.'

I slightly blushed and felt somewhat queer—I had not yet got beyond my blushing period and even in Andy's presence I felt a strange half-conscious sensation whenever he referred—even in joke—to Alice Dickson.

'No,' I replied, 'I don't often go there before evening. I am just lounging about to kill time. I feel very tired and lonesome these long summer afternoons, and especially since I began my holidays.'

'When will you be out of your apprenticeship?' asked Andy.

'Next Christmas,' I replied, 'and I am very anxious for the day of my emancipation. I am then going to the city and father will set me up in a business for myself.'

'I'll go with you,' laughingly he said, 'you are so green and know so little of the world that you will have to have a guardian, a kind of wet nurse, you know. Boys do get lost and picked up by strange characters in a city.'

The tone of these remarks rather grated upon my nerves and I felt almost like resenting them; but the sharp reply died upon my lips when Andy—as we sauntered along—continued:

'It would be funny,' said he 'to watch the countenances of the city folks, when you would tell them where you came from and have to admit that you were a stranger to Dipso Castle. Wouldn't old "Bum Donnelly" or flashy "Ned Gibson" grin from ear when you related the story of your ignorance. I say, Jack,' he said after a pause, 'I'd advise you not even to go into the castle, nor join its crowd—you see your name would be a by-word in every city club, and you'd pass for a curiosity all through the town. The boys would point you out and say, "There goes Jack Lindsey, from Stultiland, he never was in Dipso." By the powers, they could make a song of it. Just let us see; yes, I have it—

'He is all bone and skin, see—  
His name is Johnny Lindsey;  
He comes from Stultiland—  
He hasn't got the sand;  
He neither smokes nor chews;  
He is always in the blues;  
Nothing ever crossed his lips, oh!  
He never was in Dipso!

No! No! No!

'By hemlock, it would be——'

'For heaven's sake shut up,' I cried, amusing and witty as his banter seemed, I was far from enjoying it.

'Look here, Andy,' I said, 'I'm going to Dipso Castle now.'

He looked at me in well-feigned amusement, then he jumped straight in the air, flung up his hat and began to fling himself about like an Indian at a ghost dance, while at every bound he let a war whoop that might waken the dead. I thought the fellow had gone mad.

'Look you here, Andy,' I shouted, — 'do you often take them?' Let us know when

they are coming on the next time. I might have heart disease and your fits would prove fatal to me. A shock, you know!' He made no reply; but, picking up his hat, he caught me under the arm, and off we went like two madmen, helter-skelter up the road. We never drew breath, or stopped to talk till we were in the very heart of a crowd of loungers moving slowly up the Castle steps. I think that Andy did not want to let me have time to change my mind. Just at the door I drew back to collect my thoughts, regain my wind, and say: 'But I have no right of access; I am not a member.' 'Come along, old boy; no exclusiveness here,'—he replied. And in we went.



THE HOURS WENT BY LIKE MINUTES.

[The old man paused at this stage of his story, and remarked that his time to go away was approaching and, if I desired that he should conclude his tale, it would be necessary to cut it short. Fearing I might not see him again, and anxious to hear something more about the Castle of Dipso, I begged of him to continue, even if he were only able to give me a short sketch of his eventful career. For a moment he seemed wrapped in deep thought, and a shadow came over his features, like the cloud just then obscuring the moon. Shaking off the momentary lethargy that overcame him, he went on very rapidly with his peculiar story.]

'On my first appearance inside the walls of Dipso my youth, my unsophisticated manners, my apparent ignorance of the ways and customs of the place, attracted some attention to me. But soon I was lost in the vast multitude that seemed to swell around me. I was forgotten by all except my immediate companion. I cannot describe the scene before me; each one seemed hurrying breathlessly after some particular pleasure. The gilded walls, the gorgeous ornaments, the delicious odors, the sweet yet fiery beverages, the intoxicating whirl, all seemed to warp my soul in a delirium of enjoyment. From the great rotunda I was ushered into a spacious drawing-room, where elegant ladies smiled upon the gorgeous surroundings, and familiarly joined most exquisite young men in the mazes of the dance, or the more absorbing excitement of the games. It was all a dream—it lasted for hours, but the hours seemed minutes. It was late when I returned home. What a fevered night I spent! Ill as I felt myself next morning, still my only desire was to arise and to await, in anxious expectation, the hour when I might reasonably return to the scenes of the past day's revels.

My parents passed no remark as they handed me a note from Alice, asking me to spend the next day with her, and expressing wander at my absence the day previous. For a moment I thought how unkind it was of me not to have gone to see her, and I felt