

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Mother's Room.

'It is very pretty,' said Mrs. Leslie, looking at the newly arranged dressing-table that she had been called to admire, and then letting her eyes wander around the room with all its dainty blue and white furnishing. 'It all looks so cool and restful.'

'Doesn't it?' answered Laura, well pleased. 'I call it the "Blue Room."'

'And mine is the pink room,' laughed merry Beth, turning to her father who, passing through the hall, had peeped in to see what the three were about.

loving girl; she cared for all bright and pretty things still.

'Only, of course, a mother cares more for her children's enjoyment than for her own,' she said, as if answering some secret thought, as she slowly took up her work.

Money had not been very abundant; there had been many little sacrifices that somebody must make, and she had taken these upon herself so quietly that nobody noticed, and had pushed the girls so constantly into life's pleasant things that even her husband had almost forgotten that she might care for

'But there are a lame back and a sprained ankle that must keep her quiet for three or four weeks at least, and you young ladies will have the benefit of running the establishment yourselves.'

'Oh! we will take care of the goods and chattels if you will only mend mother up,' declared Beth, with a laugh on her lip, but with tears in her eyes.

No invalid could have had more tender care, but the unwonted duties kept the young housekeepers busy, and they remarked regretfully on having to leave their patient so much to herself.

'But I don't mind,' she answered one day. 'I'm not suffering now, you know. I can read and think, and it rests me just to be in this lovely room and look around me.'

'There, that's what we ought to have known long ago,' said Laura, as she went downstairs again. 'She never shall go back to that ugly, dingy room again, never!'

'But you can't make her consent to keep yours, Laura,' said Beth, doubtfully. 'You know she wouldn't be happy that way.'

'Then we will make hers into a new one,' answered Laura resolutely. 'Something shall be done.'

And so the loving little plot began. There was not much money to spare, but Beth suddenly decided that she could get along nicely without a new dress, and Laura said that since mother was sick she should not be able to take her little trip to the country, anyway. Those bits of economy gave a small fund to start with, and there was ingenuity, and skilful, willing fingers to do the rest.

'It seemed as if the very vines in the hanging-basket knew that they were intended for mother's room, and grew accordingly,' Laura said.

The father was taken into the secret and lent his aid to carry out the plan, and the busy days were happy ones.

'I am well enough now to go back to my own room, and give yours back to you again,' Mrs. Leslie had said several times, and one day the proposition was accepted.

Was there just the faintest breath of a sigh as they drew her chair to the familiar door? If there was, it was lost the next moment in an exclamation of pleasure as her eyes caught sight of the unfamiliar



'NOT SO BAD AS IT MIGHT BE,' SAID THE DOCTOR.

'Laura catches at every bit of pretty blue that she can lay her hands upon and bears it off to her bower, while I pounce upon all the pink. Between us we are like Mr. and Mrs. Spratt—we lick the platter clean.'

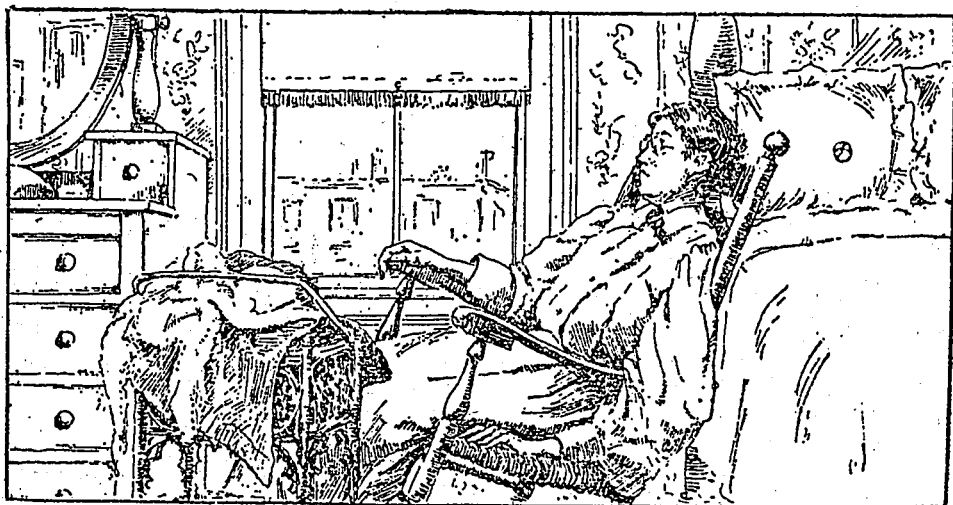
'I believe you do, if the family pocket-book represents the platter,' answered her father good-naturedly. He was very proud of his bright, handsome girls. 'And what might your mother's room be called?'

'Dear, me! It hasn't any name,' said Laura, with a comical twist of her face, 'but it might safely be called the "left over room," for dear, blessed mamma, takes all the old things, and ugly things, and things that "can be made do," and gives all the nice fresh ones to "the girls."'

All four laughed, as if the arrangement so truthfully stated was the most natural one in the world. Then the mother turned away. She had some work that must be done before supper, she said. Once in her own room, however, she leaned back in her chair and rested a moment before she drew the mending-basket toward her. It might have been because she was tired, or because she saw in it such sharp contrast with the one she had just left, but her own room looked unusually plain, almost shabby, that afternoon. She had taken the old sitting-room carpet, and it was faded and had taken careful turning and much study to make it even whole. The furniture was all in odd, old-fashioned pieces which, though comfortable, did not harmonize. There were no frills or dainty cushions, no little decorative arrangements of any sort. She had no time for them, and they would have seemed hopelessly out of place in the general homeliness. Yet, she had been a beauty-

them herself. Neither did she think of it. She only acknowledged to herself that the days had grown to seem rather monotonous, and that she found it hard to shake off a feeling of weariness and depression.

A spool of silk worked a revolution. An innocent little spool of silk dropped upon the stairs, on which the mother, hurrying down to look after the tea-table, slipped and fell. The frightened household were at her



'WHAT DOES IT MEAN?' SHE SAID.

side in a moment, and found her white and unconscious.

'Carry her to my room,' said Laura's trembling voice. 'There's a light there.'

They laid her gently on the bed in the dainty "Blue Room," and half an hour later the pale face was smiling again, and the bluff family doctor declaring that "it wasn't half as bad as it might have been."

beauty of the room before her.

'But I don't understand. What does it all mean?' she said.

'It means,' began Beth, 'it means' — and then she choked and left the sentence unfinished.

'It means — do you remember those rag carpets Aunt Dill used to make?' asked Laura, dropping on a hassock at her mo-