

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## HIS OTHER CHANCE

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**T**HE half-dozen years between them made a difference, of course. The younger boy addressed the older as "Mr. Winthrop," and the older called the younger "Jimmy," or "Freckles," or "James McIntosh, Esq.," according to his varying moods. Yet the two were excellent friends. Jimmy regarded Arthur Winthrop as a superior being, and in his secret heart cherished an ambition to be exactly like him. Arthur found Jimmy bright, amusing, and companionable, and he knew that the office would be a different place without his cheery, freckled countenance.

In confidential moments, when the work of neither was pressing, Arthur heard much about Jimmy's home life. His father was dead. His mother did dress-making for her neighbors, and managed to earn enough to provide for the family, with Jimmy's assistance. His sister was in the high school. "She's going to be a teacher some day," Jimmy confided to his friend. "And she practices on me at night. I'm in bank discount now."

"Getting ready to be a banker, I suppose?" Arthur suggested, and Jimmy laughed joyously. But as the young man turned back to his ledger, he found himself feeling very sorry for Jimmy. The boy's life was a routine like that of a middle aged man. After his full day of work his evenings were spent in study. "Not a bit of fun anywhere, poor little chap!" Arthur said to himself. The fact that Jimmy did not seem to realize the pathos of his situation did not lessen Arthur's sympathy. "I suppose," he reflected, "he never had enough good times to miss them."

He came into the office one Saturday morning, his face unusually bright. Jimmy was there before him, and the young man returned the boy's greeting with boisterous good humor. Presently he drew a square of pink cardboard from his pocket, and tossed it toward the lad.

"There, Jimmy," Arthur said, "that stands for a good time tomorrow, and here's a quarter for peanuts and whatever else you want." He spun the coin through the air, and Jimmy caught it dexterously, while he turned to read the printing on the pink ticket. Arthur watched for the expression of delight he had pictured on Jimmy's face. Instead he saw a dawning dismay. Jimmy's chin dropped. His whole appearance suggested indecision and misery rather than spontaneous satisfaction.

"Well," demanded Arthur, tartly. "What's the matter? Can't you read it? It's a ticket for an excursion to Maple Point tomorrow. The steamer leaves at nine in the morning and gets back at six-thirty, and there's a band on board. What are you scowling over that for?"

"I didn't know I was scowling, Mr. Winthrop," Jimmy stammered. "But the excursion is on Sunday."

"So I noticed before I bought the ticket. You couldn't go on any other day, could you?"

"No, sir. But you see"—

"Well?" demanded Arthur, sharply, as Jimmy's explanation came to a full stop.

"There's a sort of rough crowd that goes on these Sunday excursions to the Point, isn't there? And there's a lot of drinking and all kinds of talk." Jimmy glanced at his friend and halted again. Arthur's face did not invite a fuller expression of opinion.

"Oh, all right, Jimmy! I don't know as you have to drink or swear because you're in a crowd that does both. I wouldn't give much for a fellow who has to copy those about him, whatever they happen to be doing. You may throw that ticket into the waste-basket, Jimmy. I wanted to give you a chance for a good time for once. But if you would rather stay at home and go to Sunday school, all right.

Jimmy fingered the pink ticket nervously. "Oh, I'll go, Mr. Winthrop. But you see I thought"—

"Don't go to oblige me," snapped Arthur; and Jimmy put the ticket in his vest pocket and went about his work with a wistful face. As for Arthur, he could not overcome his sense of injury. To plan to do one a favor, and then have him in two minds about accepting it, is trying indeed.

Just before they left the office that afternoon Jimmy approached him with a propitiatory air. "Think it's going to be pleasant tomorrow?"

"I don't know," said Arthur, without looking up.

"It'll be fine on the water if it don't rain," Jimmy said, with a little quaver in his voice. "I'll tell you about it Monday morning, Mr. Winthrop."

Arthur's offended dignity was not quite proof against the wistfulness of the boy's manner. "All right, Jimmy," he said, less frigidly. "Hope you'll have a good time."

Sunday dawned cloudless. Arthur slept late, and when he woke his room was flooded with sunshine. He looked at his watch and smiled. "Jimmy's off," he reflected, sleepily. "Well, the outing will do the little fellow good. A boy of fourteen oughtn't to settle down to a steady grind, the way he does. He ought to get over some of those strait-laced notions. He'll have time enough for that sort of thing by and by." He arose with the comfortable feeling of a philanthropist, and hummed a tune while he dressed. He felt that he would enjoy his holiday doubly because of the good Jimmy's outing was sure to do him.

That feeling of satisfaction lingered with him all day. It was still his when he came up by the wharves late in the afternoon. The setting sun had turned the water to the color of blood, and the hulls of the vessels looked black against it. He noticed a crowd at one of the piers, and wondered idly why. A man passed him at a run. A little further back came a woman, her apron thrown over her head, moaning as she ran.

Something was wrong. Arthur stopped short, a strange uneasiness possessing him. A man came out of the alley and addressed him without preface, as if they had been old acquaintances:

"Say, have you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, about the 'Isabelle.' She ran

into a schooner this afternoon, and was cut in two. They could see her at the Point, but before they could get the boats to her she had gone down. The crowd on board was panic stricken—you know what Sunday excursion crowds are like—and as soon as the 'Isabelle's' own boats were launched they just swarmed in and overturned 'em. Half a dozen men or so managed to swim ashore. They say that not another soul was saved."

"The 'Isabelle?' The 'Isabelle?'" Arthur was repeating the name stupidly. Where had he heard it? Then suddenly he staggered. All at once he had seemed to see a slip of pink cardboard, and a boy's face, hesitancy and doubt in every line. "Not the 'Isabelle?'" Arthur cried. "There must be some mistake."

The man caught his arm. "Hold up," he said gently. "There's no use giving way. Did you have somebody aboard?"

Arthur nodded. Words would not come. "I wouldn't have told you the way I did if I'd known that," said the man, kindly. "I'll go down with you to the pier. Maybe we can learn something."

But nothing more was to be learned at the pier. The few officials of the company on the scene wore sober faces, but could only shake their heads as questions were hurled at them. The tug boats and launches in the harbor were all hurrying away to the scene of the disaster, the smoke of the tugs rising black above the red water. The crowd waited silently, the eyes of all straining ahead. Arthur turned away.

He had sent him to his death. But it was not that that lay like a crushing weight upon his heart. The boy had gone reluctantly, violating his own sense of right, choosing to do wrong rather than displease his friend. Only that morning Arthur had told himself that Jimmy would have time enough to settle certain questions by and by. Poor little Jimmy! How short the time had been after all.

He had stumbled on without realizing where he was going, and now the stars were out. He stopped and stood looking up into the serene silence. "It was all my fault," he cried aloud, "all my fault!" His voice rose shrilly as if to reach the ear of an unseen Judge. Poor Jimmy had looked up to him, had respected his opinion, had wished to please him. What chance had his conscience against it all? Surely God must see where the blame lay.

How differently he would advise him if he had it to do over again! Oh, for another chance!" cried the voice of his tortured heart. He had never stopped to think before what one's influence might mean. Now he would tell Jimmy, "Live up to your principles. Be true to your ideals. The greatest thing in life is not having a good time nor gaining so called success, but being loyal to the right." That was what he would say if he could live Saturday over again. But how unlike this was to the thing he had said!

It came to him suddenly that Jimmy's mother and sister might not know, and he began to retrace his steps. He tried to think of words with which to tell them, but his brain was in a whirl. How could he look that mother in the face and tell her that her boy was dead? How did any one ever find the courage to tell a mother such news? He went on mechan-

ically. When he climbed the steps he felt that he must leave her to read the tragedy in his face, for he had no words in which to tell it.

A pleasant-faced woman opened the door in answer to his ring, and as he stepped into the little hall he had time to think that her son's eyes were like hers. "Is this Jimmy's mother?" he heard himself say, and then he felt that he could say no more.

The door into an adjoining room opened suddenly, and a small, alert figure darted out. "Why, Mr. Winthrop!" a voice cried, and a freckled face looked up, radiant with welcome.

"Jimmy!" Arthur gasped. He reeled, and unconsciously put out his hands as if to keep the boy away. "Jimmy! How did you get back?"

A wave of color drowned the freckles temporarily. "I didn't get back," said Jimmy, resolutely, "'cause I didn't go."

"He don't want to offend you, Mr. Winthrop," said the motherly-faced woman who had opened the door, "and he certainly appreciates your kindness; but when he came to think it over, he didn't feel that he could go without sacrificing his principles."

Then something unexpected happened, for Arthur sat down on the stairs and sobbed, and it was some time before he could explain. But finally it was all understood, and he found himself installed in the one easy-chair of the establishment, while Jimmy's mother hurried away to make him a cup of tea, in spite of his protests. Jimmy himself stood beside him holding his hand tightly.

"I thought it over all the way home," Jimmy said, "and then I told mother I was going. And she asked me if I'd prayed about it. I hadn't," Jimmy confessed, "and I didn't want to either, but I did it at last, and then I burned the ticket up for fear I'd change my mind. I hated so to have you put out at me. Next time," Jimmy concluded, "I'll say 'No' right out at the start."

"Next time!" Arthur repeated. "Well, next time things will be different with me, too." A sudden reverent gratitude filled his heart. God had given them both another chance.

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