

## Our Boys and Girls.

### A BOY'S PROMISE.

The school was out, and down the street

A noisy throng came thronging;  
The hue of health, a gladness sweet,  
To every face belonging.

Among them strode a little lad,  
Who listened to another,  
And mildly said, half grave, half sad;  
"I can't—I promised mother."

A shout went up, a ringing shout,  
Of boisterous derision;  
But not one moment left in doubt  
That manly, brave decision.

"Go where you please, do what you will,"

He calmly told the other;  
"But I shall keep my word, boys, still;  
I can't—I promised mother."

Ah! who can doubt the future course  
Of one who thus had spoken?  
Through manhood's struggle, gain  
and loss  
Could faith like this be broken!

God's blessing on that steadfast will,  
Unyielding to another,  
That bears all jeers and laughter still,  
Because he promised mother!

—George Cooper.

### PAUL'S GOAT TEAM.

BY SARAH ENDICOTT QBER.

Paul Gopet went to bed nine years old, and when he awoke he was ten. But he wished he was not as old, when his three brothers gave him each ten slaps to begin the day with.

"Love pats don't hurt," said Sister Sallie, and she gave him ten kisses to make up.

Birthdays came so frequent in the Gopet family that they were not celebrated.

"We would never do anything else but celebrate," said jolly Mother Gopet, "if we kept all the birthdays and holidays in the year."

But Mother and Father Gopet had always some nice surprise in store. Paul came right in the middle of the family, which was like a flight of steps from Tom, who was very proud of his neckties and downy upper lip, down to Baby Bunting, whose one-act performance of putting his chubby toe into his mouth delighted the whole tribe, and convulsed them with laughter.

"Does any one know of a birthday?" asked Father Gopet, solemnly, at the breakfast table.

"I've got one," cried Paul, eagerly.

"Now that is strange," said his father. "There was something out in the barn for a boy with a birthday. Are you sure you are the one?"

Yes, Paul was sure, there was no other Gopet birthday in that month; which was a mercy, as Mother Gopet said, for Christmas came in that month, too, and New Year's followed close behind, and what would she do with any more "remembering days?"

Off to the barn flew the whole lot, Tom's long legs leading the mob, while Sallie brought up the rear, with Baby Bunting's head bobbing over her shoulder.

That big old barn! There never was another such place! No cows or horses were there, or had been for years. It

was as sweet and fragrant as could be, with its big mows chock-full of hay. There was a real floor for a second story, that lifted up in the middle, when the hay was put in, just like the draw to the bridge that spanned the broad river a mile away. There were real stairs leading to the upper story, not a ladder like those in the other barns in the neighborhood. Way up in the "cock-loft" were Tom's pigeon's, and the pretty "pouters" and "fantails" were so tame that the children could catch them and hold and pat them to their heart's content.

Down in the basement were guinea pigs, rabbits and cages of white mice, besides toads and other reptiles and cats—cats everywhere, of all sizes and colors. For the Gopets were all enthusiastic lovers of any and every living thing.

In the stalls were four goats. Lily was a snow-white African goat with long, black horns. Nannie was a common gray goat, with a wonderful appetite for all sorts of indigestible things, from the children's dresses to nails and old tin cans. But the prettiest sight of all were the twins, Lily's kids, Jettie and Gypsy, which belonged to Paul. They were so exactly alike that no one but he could tell them apart. They were black and white, and spotted beautifully.

But we shall never get to the birthday surprise if we try to describe all the barn pets, so I will tell you now what it was. There in the middle floor stood Jettie and Gypsy harnessed to the prettiest little wagon! The goats tossed their heads, and rattled their shining harness as if they were proud enough of it all. The old barn rang with the shouts of delight and surprise, as the tribe crowded around the little turnout. But Paul still stood in the door-way, staring with eyes and mouth wide open but never uttering a sound.

"Go see your birthday present," said Sallie, giving him a little push.

"Is that mine?" gasped Paul, drawing a long breath.

"Read the placard," said Sallie, pointing to a card that was fastened on the harness. And Paul read, "For the little old Faithful."

"Is that me?" he gasped again.

"Who else can it be?" asked Sallie. "Who gets the kindlings every night? Who runs the errands when all the rest shirks out? Who does all the chores when the other boys play hooky?"

"And who cuts wood for poor Ma'am Gallop?" cried Tom.

"Who digs out the paths for her when the snow comes?"

"And who always gives up the biggest piece, and gives me the biggest bit of his apple?" chimed in little Claire, whose heart lay very near her mouth.

"And who does the work the unfaithful boy leaves undone?" finished Sallie severely, looking straight at Teddy, who turned very red and looked crest-fallen.

"Oh, hush!" he cried. "I never did nothing" (for his feelings always affected his grammar). "I loved to do those things. I never did nothing—never."

But Paul's joy was unbounded when he at last realized that the whole outfit was his own. He had trained the goats to work in harness from the time they were tiny kids; though ...s harness was made from bits of string, and his wagon from a soap box, ingeniously combined with the wheels of a cast-off baby carriage. But this harness was a "sure enough" one, of shining red leather, all studded with brass. And this wagon

was a miniature express, strongly made and gay with bright paint. Was there ever such a lucky boy?

"Oh, my—oh my!" screamed Paul, his blue eyes shining with delight. "It's—it's—it's just goluptious!" and that to Paul expressed the height of appreciation.

Paul never was happy unless he could share his pleasure, so Elsie and little Claire were politely assisted into the back seat of the wagon, and Teddy and Paul took the front and off they went for a ride.

Paul had other uses for it, and many an errand he went on for his parents or the neighbors. He made a "heater," or snow-plow, and with his goats attached, he cleared the paths for all the yards in the neighborhood. And whenever there was a lonely old lady Master Paul could always be reckoned on, to clear paths, do errands or bring wood with his team, and his bright, cheery face did the lonely old hearts as much good as did his ministrations.

### A BRAVE COWARD.

If one is brave on the outside quite brave in doing what is right, does it matter if, inside, one is full of fear? I think not.

Now Archibald was afraid of many things—of the dark for one thing, and of going alone from his house to grandmother's for another. Yet Archibald would go upstairs at supper time, when no one else was there and there was no light, but many dark corners all about, and reach his small hand into the closet, which was even darker than the hall and the room, catch up father's slippers, and then run down stairs with them to where father was waiting in the sitting-room by the bright lamp, to change them for his heavy business shoes. Archibald would come bursting into the pleasant room with his eyes shining and his breath coming quick, and set down the slippers with an air of triumph.

"Thank you, my boy," father would say.

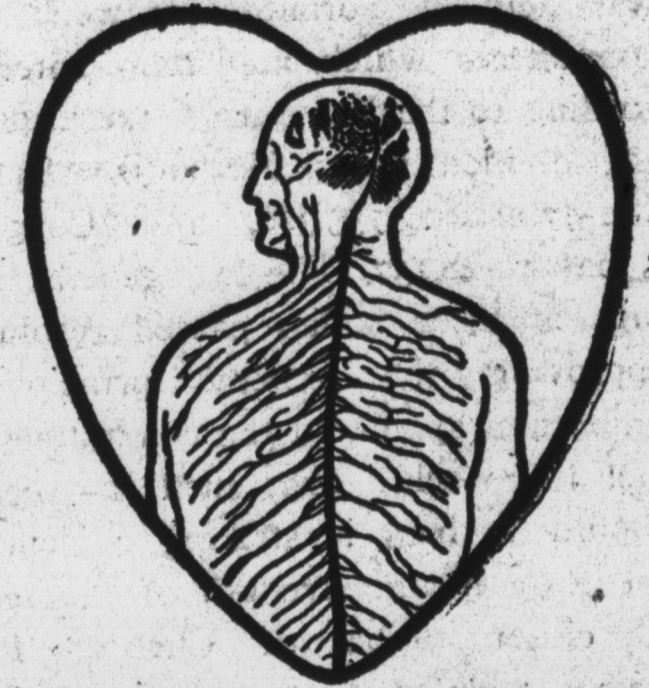
Archibald would beam with pleasure. He never told how afraid he was of the dark hall. He did not know what it was that frightened him; but the furniture did not look as it did in the daytime and the clothes hanging in the closet would brush against him, as he opened the door, in a dreadful manner—not at all as they did in daylight.

Archibald was only five. It was four blocks from his house to grandmother's. Grandmother's house had a big yard and steps up from the pavement, and tall white columns at the porch with green vines all twined round them. There were flowers in the oval beds in the grass, and in the hall a glass case, holding many gay-feathered birds brought from southern lands, and in the parlor shells and coral and seaweed from a far-away ocean, and in the dining room caraway-seed cookies in the great tureen. Could a boy go to a nicer house than that to spend the day! Besides, there was grandmother herself, always ready to tell stories about when she was a little girl.

Now when Archibald was four his mother decided he was old enough to go alone to grandmother's. Everyone on the route to his grandmother's knew Archibald. So how could he get lost, with so many kind people on the way?

When told he might go to grandmother's all alone and stay for dinner and carry this little note from mother, Archibald swallowed hard. He was ashamed to say that he was afraid to

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walk there alone, but he was. He started bravely off, just the same; for he was a brave coward, you see—which is an excellent kind. He looked back at mother's smiling face in the window and tried to smile in return. Then he ran as fast as he could and never stopped until he was safely inside grandmother's gate. He knew this time what he was afraid of. Someone had said that there were rats in the cellar of Mr. Bell's grocery store.

Grandmother saw how out of breath he was and asked the reason. Then Archibald, who was only four then, burst out crying and confessed about being afraid of Mr. Bell's rats.

"But I came, grandma—I came," he said between sobs.

"So you did," said grandma. "Any one can be brave when they're afraid, but I call it a fine thing to be brave even when you are afraid. Now, Archibald, I will tell you what I will do. I will write a letter to those rats and tell them to let my grandson alone."

After a happy day, grandmother handed him a little three-cornered note directed to "All Rats in Mr. Bell's Cellar." Inside she had written: "Rats, do not hurt my grandboy, Archibald, for he is a good boy."

Archibald walked proudly home; and, even as he passed the grocery store he held his head high and did not run, though his eyes shone and his breath came quick. He treasured his note and carried it every time he passed Mr. Bell's.

No one knew he was afraid of the dark hall, so no one gave him a note to the shadows. He kept on doing the things he was afraid of in spite of being afraid. Except about those rats, he never told anyone. I do not know what he is afraid of now, for he is a tall man, with boys of his own; but, if he is a coward, he is a brave one, I am sure of that.—S. S. Times.