

**THE YOUNG VISITERS:
OR, MR. SALTEENA'S
PLAN. [NEW YORK]**

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The Young Visitors: Or, Mr. Salteena's Plan. [New York] by Daisy Ashford & J. M. Barrie

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DAISY ASHFORD & J. M. BARRIE

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**BY
DAISY ASHFORD**

**WITH A PREFACE BY
J. M. BARRIE**



**NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY**

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PREFACE

THE "owner of the copyright" guarantees that "The Young Visitors" is the unaided effort in fiction of an authoress of nine years. "Effort," however, is an absurd word to use, as you may see by studying the triumphant countenance of the child herself, which is here reproduced as frontispiece to her sublime work. This is no portrait of a writer who had to burn the oil at midnight (indeed there is documentary evidence that she was hauled off to bed every evening at six): it has an air of careless power; there is a complacency about it that by the severe might perhaps be called smugness. It needed no effort for that face to knock off a masterpiece. It probably represents precisely how she looked when she finished a chapter. When she was actually at work I think the ex-

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pression was more solemn, with the tongue firmly clenched between the teeth; an unholy rapture showing as she drew near her love chapter. Fellow-craftsmen will see that she is looking forward to this chapter all the time.

The manuscript is in pencil in a stout little note book (twopence), and there it has lain for years, for though the authoress was nine when she wrote it she is now a grown woman. It has lain, in lavender as it were, in the dumpy note book, waiting for a publisher to ride that way and rescue it; and here he is at last, not a bit afraid that to this age it may appear "Victorian." Indeed if its pictures of High Life are accurate (as we cannot doubt, the authoress seems always so sure of her facts) they had a way of going on in those times which is really surprising. Even the grand historical figures were free and easy, such as King Edward, of whom we have perhaps the most human picture ever penned, as he appears at a levée "rather sumshiously," in a "small

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but costly crown," and afterwards slips away to tuck into ices. It would seem in particular that we are oddly wrong in our idea of the young Victorian lady as a person more shy and shrinking than the girl of to-day. The Ethel of this story is a fascinating creature who would have a good time wherever there were a few males, but no longer could she voyage through life quite so jollily without attracting the attention of the censorious. Chaperon seems to be one of the very few good words of which our authoress had never heard.

The lady she had grown into, the "owner of the copyright" already referred to, gives me a few particulars of this child she used to be, and is evidently a little scared by her. We should probably all be a little scared (though proud) if that portrait was dumped down in front of us as ours, and we were asked to explain why we once thought so much of ourselves as that.

Except for the smirk on her face, all I can learn of her now is that she was one of

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a small family who lived in the country, invented their own games, dodged the governess and let the rest of the world go hang. She read everything that came her way, including, as the context amply proves, the grown-up novels of the period. "I adored writing and used to pray for bad weather, so that I need not go out but could stay in and write." Her mother used to have early tea in bed; sometimes visitors came to the house, when there was talk of events in high society: there was mention of places called Hampton Court, the Gaiety Theatre and the "Crystale" Palace. This is almost all that is now remembered, but it was enough for the blazing child. She sucked her thumb for a moment (this is guesswork), and sat down to her amazing tale.

"Her mother used to have early tea in bed." Many authors must have had a similar experience, but they all missed the possibilities of it until this young woman came along. It thrilled her; and tea in