

THE CZARINA'S LOVE STORY.

The Czar always loved his orphan cousin, and as they met somewhat frequently he did not lack opportunity of discovering for himself that his love was reciprocated. But there were grave objections to the match, and the young lovers had many enemies. The Czar's parents opposed the union with all the emphasis they could command. Princess Alix was a Lutheran, and Nicholas belonged to the Greek Church. To Alexander III. this was almost a fatal objection to their marriage, and everything was done that could be done to convince the young heir to all the Russias that he must accept another bride. Even Queen Victoria joined the little army arrayed against the lovers. Princess Alix was her favourite granddaughter, and she did not wish her to change her religion or to face the perils of the Russian throne. There was another serious objection, too. Both the lovers were delicate, and Alexander III. was naturally anxious that the throne of Russia should be occupied by his son's son. At last the obstinate Czarowitch was sent on a voyage round the world, it being hoped that in the constant change of scene he would forget his love and come back prepared to do as he was told. The love which had bound Nicholas to his orphan cousin was not, however, a thing that could be put off in a new country, and the heir-apparent went back to Russia more determined than ever not to marry unless he loved. The voyage had greatly improved his health, so that part of the objection was removed. But there still remained the religious objection, and Nicholas pressed his suit. He was fortunate in securing two powerful allies—the then Duchess of Edinburgh and the Grand Duchess Serge, sister of the Princess. Together these women were able to overcome the father's objections, but Queen Victoria had yet to be won over. It was no easy task to convert the Queen, but it was done at length. The

Duchess of Edinburgh persuaded the Prince of Wales, and the Princess Victoria prevailed upon Her Majesty. Then, as if to compensate the young people for their disappointment, the Queen suggested that they should visit England. Prince Louis of Battenberg invited the Princess to Walton-on-Thames, and hither the young man who was to rule a hundred millions of human beings came to win the hand and heart of the woman he loved. One would have thought that now the task was easy, but the Princess was not easily won. If others had felt that she should not change her creed, she herself had felt so even more strongly. Years before, when the Czarowitch first spoke of love to her, she had not listened, because of her horror of having to change her creed, in which she is said to have devoutly believed, and her strong religious nature had only rooted this objection deeper and deeper as the years went by. What happened at Walton, how passionately the devoted Nicholas pleaded, we do not know. But we know that a year afterward, at the wedding of her brother, the Grand Duke Ernest of Hesse, and Princess Victoria Melitia of Coburg, the betrothal was publicly announced. The Czarowitch had turned up at Coburg at the last moment, not having been expected until shortly before his arrival. "I am determined at last to have an answer out of her own mouth," he said to his parents as he started. A day or two before the Princess had talked of her lover with tears in her eyes. She gave vent to her religious scruples before her brother. "You do not love him, then?" said the Grand Duke Ernest; and the answer, "Oh, yes, I do, I do," showed how painful the struggle in her mind must have been. The Queen was the first to be informed of the news that the Czarowitch had proposed and been accepted, and there was great joy among their friends that at last the long wooing was over. Then came the illness of Alexander III., and the Princess was summoned to Livadia to nurse the dy-

ing Czar. When the monarch passed away, and her lover was Emperor of Russia, Princess Alix wore no signs of mourning. It was a happy thought of the widowed Empress that no needless pain should mar the joy of the bride, who was so soon to share her son's throne, and the house of mourning was brightened day by day by the beautiful, sad figure of the future Empress, dressed in purest white. It was thought best that there should be no delay for form's sake, and the funeral was quickly followed by a wedding. On November 26, 1894, at the age of 22, Princess Alix became Empress of Russia.—"The Young Woman."



BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

"Birds in their nests agree," says Dr. Watts, but children of a family do not always follow their example. And yet there is nothing more beautiful than for a brother and sister to be on terms of the closest confidence. The attitude of a sister toward a brother is largely responsible for the brightness or the shadow of home life. A downright bon camaraderie, a chumminess, a confidential friendship conduce to a firmly founded union of affection and thought that is a moral support to both of them, to say nothing of its delightful influence upon the daily domestic family round.

Most girls seem to regard their brothers as necessary evils. They do not think it worth their while to be pleasant with them. When with a brother they lay aside all their entertaining ways, their attractive manners, their pleasing graces, and seem to wish him in Greenland rather than by their side.

It is only because he meets some other boy's sister that he does not arrive at the conclusion that the sex is selfish and altogether disagreeable. And it is no wonder that he affects the society of others of his kind, speaks slightly of all girls, oftentimes gets into bad habits that he

would not think of if he were made much of at home, and, in fact, acts and feels very different from the youth whose sister is a real comfort and a good friend to him.

When this condition exists the two discover that being brother and sister need not interfere with their having a right jolly time in each other's society. When no other escort is available the brother acts as cavalier and is as attentive as though he were "beaming" some other girl. The sister, on her side, makes herself equally agreeable, and when they get home they do not feel that an evening has been wasted because they had to spend it in each other's company. When the time for sweethearts arrives they become more than ever confident, knowing that no matter who comes into their lives there is one niche which can only be filled by the brother or the sister, who will ever occupy a place which cannot be secured because it is distinctly individual.

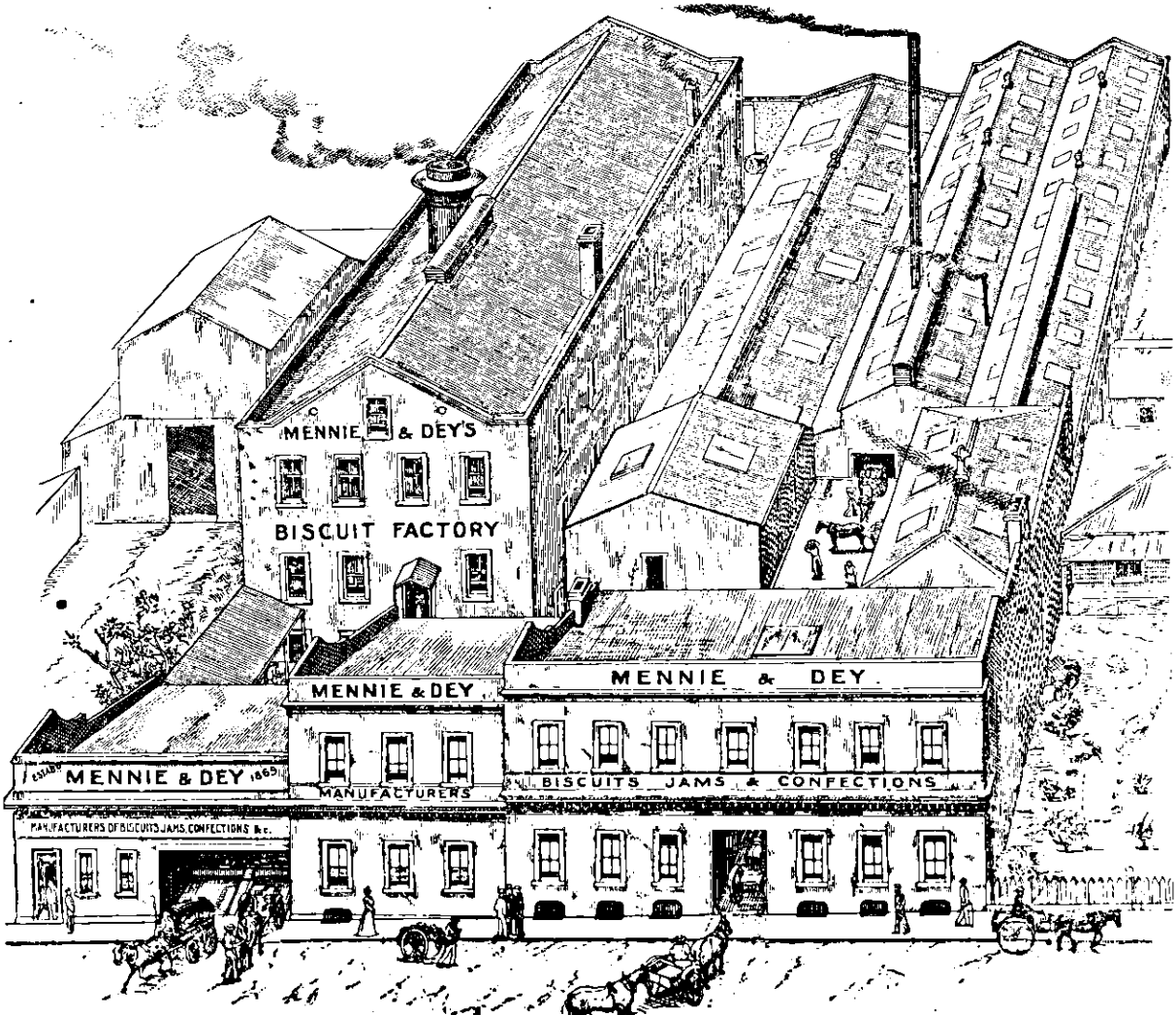
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