

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## The Reformation of Katherine

(New York 'Observer'.)

'But, Charles, something must be done to break Katherine of this. The habit grows constantly, and if her fault is ever to be corrected we must begin at once. She is now fifteen and I have thought and hoped that she would outgrow it; but instead of doing that, the habit is, as I said, growing worse.'

'Oh, pshaw, Mary, that is just imagination on your part; nothing but imagination. Katherine displays vivacity in her language, to be sure, but not too much to be interesting, and it just suits me. Would you take all the picturesqueness from her descriptions? Why, scarcely a day passes but some one remarks to me about Katherine's brightness.'

'Yes, I also hear of Katherine's brightness, Charles, but I fear to hear of her untruthfulness. At least, you will not interfere when I correct her in your presence?'

'No, no, certainly not; but don't make her dull and ordinary in your reforming process, Mary, or—'

'Oh, papa,' cried Katherine, sweeping into the room like a hurricane, her big brown eyes sparkling with delight, 'whatever do you think? You never could guess in a hundred years, though, so you needn't try. Professor Schultze said my voice was going to be simply magnificent! With such a perfectly wonderful voice at my age, he said absolutely no success was too great for me to expect! What do you think of that, mommie? Don't, please, please don't think I'm conceited, mamma; I'm not the least, tiniest mite, for I wouldn't tell a single person in all the world but you and papa, what the professor said.'

She was on her knees now, at her mother's side, with her arms about her neck.

'Did he say any thing about practising?' asked Judge Marley, with a twinkle in his eye.

'Indeed he did, papa. He talked a solid hour about it.'

'My dear,' Mrs. Marley remonstrated, 'your entire lesson lasts but an hour. How could he talk all that time about practising, and hear your lesson besides?'

'Oh, you know what I mean mamma. He read me a regular lecture about it, and now that school is out I intend to practice six hours every day of the week; two on vocal and four on instrumental. Then I must put an hour on my harmony,' and she sprang up and went to the piano.

Judge Marley laughed. 'I fancy the six hours will dwindle in the course of two days,' he said. 'But what about the new girl? She is here, is she? You look very tired, my dear. Try to rest now, that you have some one to relieve you. I'll be through with court in another week, and we will go to the springs for a little change. It will do you good.'

'Perhaps it might,' Mrs. Marley answered, absently. 'Charles, you must help me with Katherine. Don't you see how necessary it is that something be done?'

'Well, if Katherine must be reformed, I suppose I shall have to assist; and the judge, who had been standing with his hat in one hand, and the other upon the door knob, hastened to take his departure. He could not bear to hear that his pet had any faults. He knew her to be so much like himself that he considered her perfect. Unfortunately, as it turned out, the reformation of Katherine was delayed by Mrs. Marley's illness.

'Katherine, your mother is not well enough to come downstairs,' said Judge Marley to his daughter as she came into the dining-

room next morning, 'and you must look after the new girl as well as your mother. She will tell you what she wishes done after she has breakfasted.'

'Is mamma very dangerously sick, papa?' asked Katherine anxiously.

'No, not dangerously sick at all. She has overworked, I think. I shall leave word for Doctor Harter to call, and you must take his directions. Be very careful to make no mistake with the medicine.'

When Katherine had finished her breakfast she prepared a dainty meal for her mother and carried it to her.

'It is very unfortunate that I am not able to show Sally about the work,' said Mrs. Marley. 'So much depends upon a new girl being started aright. You must do the best you can with her, Katherine, for a short time, when I hope to be well again.' And she gave directions for Sally's installation.

Katherine found that the new girl was of the old variety; ignorant, but very willing to learn at her employer's expense. 'Now that you understand all about our lunch, Sally, I'll tell you about mamma's. She wishes only beef-tea and wafers. You mustn't take a great quantity of either to her, for sick people are very dainty, and mamma is the most particular person you ever saw when she is ill, about what she eats. Here is the beef-extract on this shelf. Take just a tiny bit, for it is as strong as concentrated lye. There's pretty near a whole beef in one little jar, so, of course, you can't use much. Put the wafers in the oven till they are crisp, not brown. About half a second will do it. I shouldn't go away if I had not promised, and mamma says I must keep my word. I'll be home to give the medicine.'

Sally followed Katherine's instructions. The result was a cupful of well-salted hot water of the palest brown color and two soft warm wafers.

'What is this?' Mrs. Marley asked, as Sally gave her the cup.

'The beef-tea, ma'am. I made it just as the young lady said I should. Is it too strong, ma'am?' asked she, anxiously.

'A little strong of salt, perhaps,' was the reply, as Mrs. Marley returned the tea to the tray.

'Faix, 'tis too bad, thin. But thin was the varry worruds she said to me: The mate is one whole cow sthewed down into that little jar, and ye must take just a teeny bit av it and a great big psnoon av salt; for it's most awful frish, thin. And I thinks to myself thin was awful chape cows at forty cents. They tell me that is all the little jar costs, to say nothing av the wurruk.'

Mrs. Marley could not doubt that Sally had followed instructions. She was too ill to explain to her, and when, an hour later, Katherine returned home she found her mother much worse.

'Oh, mamma, it is all my fault! I never, never should have left you in that perfectly thoughtless way. The luncheon was just simply adorable, and the girls looked like dreams of beauty in their—what is it, dear mamma?' she said, as she saw the color die out of her mother's face and her head sink back on the pillow. 'Oh, she's dying,' she cried, 'mamma's dying.'

She ran to the stairs and called frantically to Sally: 'Send for papa as quick as you can. Mamma's dying!'

Without waiting to inquire further, Sally hailed a small boy who happened to be passing and sent him to the court house on flying feet.

'Tell the judge his wife's a-dyin,' and to come at once,' said the breathless boy to one of the officials, who broke the news to Judge Marley as gently as possible. The court was

at once adjourned, and the judge driven rapidly home.

Katherine met him at the gate. 'Oh, papa, it was a mistake! I was frightened nearly to death, for I never saw mamma look so ill before, and you mustn't blame me.'

'Not this time, daughter,' and he passed hastily into the house.

'Katherine was excited when she sent you that word,' said Dr. Harter, smiling. 'I found Mrs. Marley had fainted, but she is better now. She tells me she ate nothing at noon and she is very weak.'

Judge Marley said nothing to Katherine, but he was convinced that his wife was right about her habit of exaggeration becoming a serious fault; and he agreed with her that the reformation should be attempted without further delay.

'Dear me,' said Katherine, in tears, 'I've tried for half a century to watch every single word that passed my lips. I'm just completely worn out and wrinkled in trying. But if you think it is really noticeable, I'll keep on trying every second of my life, if it kills me, as no doubt it will.'

'Katherine, Katherine,' exclaimed her mother, despairingly.

'Why, what's the matter, dear mamma? Don't you think I'll try when I say I will?'

'I hope so, child,' said her mother, who, still weak from her illness, felt unequal to pointing out the inaccuracies of her speech.

The next day Katherine attended a class picnic. 'Goodbye, girls!' she cried merrily, upon her return, kissing her hand to the four girls remaining in the carriage out of which she had just stepped, 'I never in all my life had such a perfectly gorgeous, delicious afternoon, and I'll never, never forget it, if I live a thousand years. Good-by! Oh, but I'm tired! absolutely tired to death.' This she addressed to her parents who were sitting on the verandah. 'Mamma, I'm positively certain you never had such a perfectly glorious afternoon.'

'Glad to see you home, perfectly,' interrupted her brother Frank, joining the group, 'Tell us all about the picnic.'

'Whatever do you mean by saying you're glad to see me home perfectly? If you interrupt I cannot finish telling you of the fun in a month. Well, to begin at the very first, as we were driving out along the willow road; and, to tell the truth, we were going faster than any express train you ever saw—'

'Is that the truth, Katherine?' her father asked gravely. 'I would purchase that horse if a reasonable sum would buy him; for a horse that could draw six girls in a heavy carriage, faster than any express—'

'Oh, papa, of course, I meant that we were driving very fast. You know what I mean. Just as we came in sight of the curve, who should we see coming towards us at a break-neck speed but old Farmer Gordon, in his old carry-all. He was leaning over the dashboard and cracking a whip that was as long as a clothes-line.' Katherine laughed gaily at the picture she drew.

'Katherine! as long as a clothes-line?'

'Oh, just a little short, tany one, mamma dear.' Katherine's temper was still unruffled.

'You know how extremely narrow the willow road is, not wider than a thread at the curve, really not wide enough for one vehicle—'

'There is no road in the country, daughter, that is not wide enough for teams to pass each other. Excuse me for interrupting, but I would not have a child of mine live longer than fifteen years and not be aware of that fact.'

A troubled look crept into Katherine's