

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Good Impression.

(Elsie Vernon, in the 'Christian Standard.')

'Now, Elizabeth, do try to make a good impression on Aunt Edith. Be careful, child, and don't do or say anything queer. She can do a great deal for the one she fancies, and she hinted to your father that she was coming to see which of the girls she liked. Now try to remember, dear, that she is a model of propriety, and hates unconventional things.'

'I'll try hard, mamma,' said Elizabeth.

Her mother turned her about carefully and gave a sigh of relief as she reflected that no one could find fault with Elizabeth's appearance. Very sweet and dainty she looked in her immaculate white dimity and her face was quite serious under the responsibility resting upon her.

Three other girls were listening to practically the same instruction at the same time. To be sure, Aunt Helen and Aunt Lucy did not say anything about being queer, for their girls did not do such unexpected things as Elizabeth sometimes did.

A half hour later the four girls met at the station, where they were to wait for the train which was bringing the long-expected aunt. Aunt Edith might well have been proud of her nieces, and a spectator would have just thought she would have to take all four, for there seemed no choice among them. All were sweet and modest and dainty, as young girls should be. Aunt Edith was a rich widow, and had said that she hoped to take one of the girls home with her.

The train was late. Jessie and Martha paced slowly up and down the shady end of the platform. Hilda and Elizabeth went on a longer walk all the way around the building. In one corner they saw a German immigrant woman, seated on her box, and trying to keep her flock of little ones near her.

'Poor thing,' cried Elizabeth, 'she looks almost tired to death.'

She has probably been travelling from New York with all those children. I believe I'll try to amuse them for a little while. Look at the baby, it can't go to sleep with the sun in its face.'

'Oh, Elizabeth,' entreated Hilda, 'they'll get you all mussy, and you know auntie will be here soon. I'd help you any other time, but I really can't to-day,' and Hilda glanced down at her dainty gown and gloves. 'Come on, dear, let's give the children some pennies and go on.'

'Well, at least I'm going to ask her if she wants anything, and where she is going. Just think how lonely and frightened she may be in this strange place.'

Elizabeth addressed the woman in German. The children gathered around and the mother's face lit up at the sound of her native tongue.

'Hilda,' said Elizabeth, 'she is going clear to Minnesota. She's been waiting here two hours and her train doesn't come until three this afternoon. I'm going to show her where she can lie down and rest, and I shall take care of the children for a while.'

She held out her hands for the flaxen-haired baby, and it came to her willingly, and Hilda sighed in despair as she saw the damp little head nestled on the white frock. Elizabeth, followed by the entire uncouth flock, set off for the waiting-room. She showed the mother the couch in a little side room, and then took the children out. The baby soon

went to sleep and Elizabeth sat down, keeping the other children near at hand, by telling them stories that taxed her German.

'I have to keep watching them,' she said to Hilda, who had come in to see how she was getting along. I'm so afraid one will get lost.'

'Just look at your dress,' said Hilda severely, 'and your hat is on one side, and your hair in disorder, and they all look so funny that every one is staring at you.'

'Hasn't the baby got pretty hair?' said Elizabeth, 'and look at his dimples, he's smiling in his sleep.'

Hilda retreated with a disapproving look.

A few minutes later Elizabeth came out with her kindergarten, as Martha said. The baby was awake now, and smiling good-naturedly.

'I'm going over to this little lunchstand to get them some milk and sandwiches,' said Elizabeth.

'You must not go,' cried the others, 'the train is due now. It might come while you are gone.'

'They're hungry,' said Elizabeth, and it will take only a minute.

The train did come in while she was gone. Aunt Edith in a fashionable travelling gown, descended and kissed her three pretty nieces.

'Where is Elizabeth?' she questioned.

'There she is by the door,' said Hilda.

Aunt Edith looked and gasped.

'With that Dutch baby?' she cried.

And Elizabeth was the centre of a striking tableau. She had returned with her charges, each of whom was munching a big sandwich. The mother had awakened and come to collect her brood. She was chattering volubly to express her thanks, and trying to take the baby. But baby clung tightly to his new friend. He was disengaged at length after being bribed by a rose that Elizabeth wore in her gown. As soon as she could escape, she came to her aunt. The freshness of her frock was gone; her hat more on one side than ever; and her hair in sad disorder. But she was the same sweet, well-bred Elizabeth, and somehow Aunt Edith didn't seem dreadfully shocked.

But Elizabeth thought she had lost her chance, and she confessed the whole matter to her mother as soon as they were alone.

'But what could I do, mother? She was a stranger, and in need of a little kindness.'

And Elizabeth's mother kissed her and said, 'There was only one thing to do, and you did it.'

It was several weeks before Elizabeth found out what Aunt Edith really thought. She came into the dining-room one day when her mother and aunt were sitting in the next room, and Aunt Edith was just saying:

'Yes, I have decided to take Elizabeth with me, if she is willing to go. I want a bright young companion. And then I can get employment for her there, you know; there is a private school right next to my place, and they want a primary teacher. Elizabeth herself seems fond of children, and I know my recommendation would secure the place for her. She told me she would like to earn something to help the younger children with their education, and I think this is just the place for her, and I can enjoy her society at the same time. There is a good salary and I hope you will see no objection to the plan if you can spare her.'

Elizabeth did not hear the rest. She ran back upstairs and cried for joy.

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Shivering Saints.

'Do you know, sir, I think there be an amazing lot of shivering saints!'

'Yes, Betty,' I replied. 'I am afraid this very cold weather must sorely try many of the Lord's poor, and we must see what we can do to help them.'

'Lor', sir,' said Betty, 'I did not mean that. I dare say some of 'em have shivering bodies, but it was their souls I was a-thinking on.'

Betty Smith was a veteran in the King's Army. One of the oldest members of the Church, though not often able to be present at the services. She was living very contentedly in an almshouse, and always had a word of welcome for me whenever I was able to call upon her in the course of my pastoral visitation.

'Well, Betty,' I said, 'I dare say I know what you mean, but just for the moment I do not quite see the application of your parable. To what in particular do you refer?'

'Do you remember the glorious day we had last summer at the sea-side?' enquired Betty.

'Yes, perfectly,' I replied.

'Well, sir, I remember seeing some of the young folks going into the water to bathe. Some of them got undressed and plunged right in, and commenced to kick about and have a fine lot of fun; but I minds one lad as had undressed in the machine, yet would not go in, but kept making little jumps in about up to his knees, and said how cold it was. His friends laughed at him and said it would be warm if he would plunge in; but he would not. And it strikes me, sir, there be a lot of shivering saints like him.'

'Bravo, Betty!' I said. 'Capital! I see.'

Stand lingering, shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.'

'Wait a bit, sir,' said Betty. 'Don't you remember the last social you giv' in the school room? Mrs. Robinson would have me come, and I minds how it was all warm, and beautiful magic-lantern pictures, and hot coffee and buns, and cake, and it was all free, and you wanted the lads to come in, and most of them did, but just one or two of the biggest wouldn't. But though they wouldn't come in, they wouldn't go away from the door, but just hung around and laughed, and made out they didn't like coffee, and buns, and also pictures; and while the others were having the warmth and the good things, they shivered outside. Lor', sir, there be a lot of shivering saints like the boys!'

'Really, Betty. Now don't you think those boys outside were more like poor sinners who will not come to the Lord Jesus, than like saints? I think so.'

'May-be, sir. But don't you think there be a lot of God's people who gets no more real comfort out of their religion than those boys did out of coffee and buns? They only look and long and shiver all the time.'

'I daresay you are right, Betty; we none of us live up to our privileges. But let me know a little more definitely what you mean. We will not talk evil one of another, but whom do you know now that you would describe as a shivering saint?'

'Why, sir, there be lots on 'em. Why, there is dear Mrs. Robinson. One of the best souls as ever was born. Many a lone hour she has passed for me, and many a little treat she has brought me; but she is a shiverer. "Oh, Betty," she said to me the other day, "when I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies!" "Lor', Mrs. Robinson," I said, "you'd