

BOYS AND GIRLS

Edmonia's Influence.

(Elizabeth Preston Allan, in 'The Wellspring'.)

Edmonia Beale opened her eyes on a wide, white world, one wintry morning, and sat up in bed, unmindful of cold shivers, to enjoy the sight.

In her Florida home snow was only a tradition of the oldest inhabitant and Edmonia had never seen real snow before in her life. She had been at Merryoaks, her Uncle Tom's place just outside of Baltimore, for some days; and now her eager wish was gratified; the snow had come at last, in great piles and in drifts and swirls.

The fairy land outside was so enchanting that Edmonia found it hard to get dressed in time for breakfast, and had an apology to make when she finally came to the table. Breakfast was a rather hurried meal at Merryoaks, for Uncle Tom and Tom, Jr., had to catch the eight-forty electric car to the city; Uncle Tom to reach his office in good time, and young Tom to answer roll call at the city college.

'My! but I envy you a new sensation, Coz,' said the collegian, after hearing the young Southerner's raptures over the snow.

'Hear him!' cried Tom's sister Frances, 'hear our "blasé" creature! A new sensation! If you remember to get my pin mended to-day, Tom, it will give me a new sensation, I assure you.'

'The head of your class might be a place of new sensations, sir,' said Uncle Tom, very severely.

'Father, can't you come home on an earlier car to-day?' questioned the mother from her end of the table; 'the cars are so miserably crowded after five o'clock in bad weather.'

Edmonia felt sure that this was meant to divert the family talk into smoother channels, and she was grateful to Aunt Sara; for Tom's face was an angry red, and the visitor felt responsible, as well as uncomfortable.

But to her surprise and disappointment, the mother did not stick to her role of guardian of the peace. At Tom's first mention of his intention to spend the night in town, his mother remonstrated bitterly, the boy answering her with impatience and scant respect; altogether it was very painful, and the young stranger was glad when the family party broke up, and she was free to establish herself in the library window to watch the great storm.

But its weird beauty was lost upon her for a while; memory was rolling backward her wonderful canvas, and showing the girl a very different background for the picture of another mother and son; her own mother this time, and her brother Tom; for the Tom Beales were confusingly numerous in the connection.

How well Edmonia remembered that summer night, when Tom was leaving for college; the oleander-scented lawn, the moon in the sky, the glowworms in the grass, and the mother's voice, full of tears, speaking through the shadowy dimness:—

'I have done my best for you, dear son, and now there is nothing more I can do, except to be good friends with you.'

Ah, how beautifully that plan had worked in the home among the oleanders! Edmonia had never heard one rasping word between that mother and that Tom, and yet there was many a difference of opinion, as there must be between one generation and another.

'Shall I tell Frances about that night—and about "being friends"—and about our Tom?'

the girl in the window seat questioned herself. 'It is a risky thing to do, and it might not answer with this Tom, but I wish—'

'Well, I declare! If this isn't too bad!' she heard her cousin's voice behind her. 'That disagreeable Tom has gone off and left my pin when I asked him to be specially careful not to forget it. I am sure he did it on purpose. Is your Tom as exasperating as ours, Eddy?'

Providence seemed to hold the door open for this timid little philosopher; she took her life in her hand, as it were, or at least the chance of her cousin's friendliness and armed with her dear mother's experience and wisdom, she set herself to answer the petulant question.

A good resolution to change a mistaken and mischievous course is often the bravest and best thing in sight; but the resolver must not expect to enter at once upon the smooth path that wiser people have gained through years of steady effort; in fact, the crossing from one path to the other is beset with many difficulties and mortifications. Frances found it so.

Tom did not come back that stormy night, and his mother's face was shadowed with pain and anxiety. When another twenty-four hours brought him home, he wore a look of sullen defiance.

'I hope your pin is mended to your satisfaction, my amiable young lady,' he said mockingly to his sister.

Frances hesitated one dangerous moment, long enough for the words to flash over memory's wire, 'Nothing I can do, except to be friends,' and then she answered gaily, 'As well as usual, thank you,' while the mother looked from one face to the other, perplexed by that new note in Frances's voice.

Tom, however, was exasperated by the unexpected answer. 'Was she trying to cajole him into being a goody-goody little boy?' And so the new plan was roughly held up.

It may be that Tom's sister could not have persevered along this discouraging way all alone; but there are no 'maybes' in our Father's plans for his children; like Queen Esther, the little girl from the land of oleanders had come to Merryoaks at this time for this very (unknown) purpose, no doubt; and she was as staunch an ally as the royal girl of old. It was not long before the boy at Merryoaks felt the difference in his home atmosphere; there was a sense of comradeship, now, that sweetened life, and made him ashamed to be disagreeable.

But it was not until Edmonia had been the rounds of the widely-branching family, and with the next autumn's frosts had gone back to the far South, that Tom had occasion to put Frances to the test, and know her for his friend and chum.

'I say, Frank,' he called to her one night, through the closed door of her chamber, 'can't I come in for a little talk?'

'Wait a minute'—she answered, hastily donning a blanket robe—'yes, certainly, come in, Tom.' But she was surprised at his manner; it was not the sauntering, patronizing air usual with the young collegian. He came in with a set look on his black brows, and went directly to his point:

'The truth is, Frances, I have played you a shabby trick, and I feel like a cad about it. I don't suppose it will do you any good for me to own up; in fact, I believe it is just a selfish sort of feeling that makes me do it; still—'

Frances found her breath coming short and quick. What did this mean? Tom had given

his family many anxious days and nights, on account of a certain tendency he had for undesirable companions; but he had never really gotten into mischief; and lately he had seemed so much more willing to stay at home; what was he about to reveal?

'It was last winter,' he began again, and a little sigh of relief escaped his listener after all, if it was last winter, it could not mean so much now—'last winter, about the time Eddy left, Ernest Shafer told me that he was going to propose your name for our Fortnightly Club, and I—it was a beastly thing for me to do—but I asked him not to do it!'

Tom ground out this confession with considerable anguish of spirit and shame and mortification; he was surprised into stupefaction, almost, to see a bright, relieved smile on his sister's face.

'Is that all?' she cried, gaily. 'Oh, Tom, you made me really scared. Why, I knew that and months ago. I'm so glad that's all.'

'You knew it months ago?' he repeated, still dazed.

'Certainly I did; don't you know somebody always tells such things? I was even told your reason (Tom suddenly got red as a coxcomb), that you said I was too snappish. Well, you needn't have said it, old man, about your sister; still, it was true.'

But Tom hardly knew what she was saying. 'You knew it all along,' he kept on repeating; and memory was busy showing him the unbroken kindness and friendliness of his sister during all that time. It was making an impression upon him for the rest of his life. He was not a demonstrative fellow, but he went over to the bed, took the blanket roll in his arms and gave it a generous hug.

'You are the best chum a fellow ever had, Frank,' he said, heartily. 'I don't deserve to have you for a sister, but things are going to be different—you'll see.'

And presently the little cousin on the Gulf coast was smiling to herself over the success of her plan—of her mother's plan rather—or just being friends with the big boys.

A Woman's Day in Shanghai.

(Alice Hamilton Rich, 'Australian Christian World'.)

A babel of strange voices, a jargon of very strange sounds just outside my window, yet it is only the grayest of gray dawn—half-past three by my little clock. Were it not that this is the accustomed manner of life, further sleep would be impossible, but with a sigh for the mornings of quiet in the homeland I fall asleep, to be awakened in a few minutes by a morning brawl between two Chinamen. They are soon surrounded by a crowd of men—one wonders where they all come from at this early hour—but after a few minutes of slapping faces the crowd disappears in convenient alley ways, while the coolies, who are already on the way to market, or bearing refuse into the country for the market gardens, adjust their bamboo poles on their shoulders and a chorus of 'he, hi ho, ho, ho, he, hi, he, ho,' is again taken up, and grows fainter and still fainter as they pass into the dim distance.

The next time I rouse 'the early pipe of half-awakened birds' comes to my ear. Magpies call from their huge nest in a tree in the yard adjoining, while sparrows chatter outside. It is now half-past six, and a coolie comes to open the blinds of the French win-