

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## 'What Time I am Afraid.'

A TRUE STORY.

(By Sarah L. Tenney, in 'Christian Intelligencer.')

A group of merry girls stood laughing and chattering on the depot platform at Myrtlewood Junction. It was a lovely June morning, and a cool, brisk breeze sent an unwonted glow to their cheeks, and a corresponding exhilaration to their youthful spirits. In true, school-girl fashion, they were all trying to talk at once, their remarks being addressed mainly to a slight, fair-haired girl, who seemed to be the centre of attraction as she was the centre of the group. Her travelling attire and the large Saratoga trunk at her side gave evidence that she was about to set forth on a journey, and the girls, her companions, had evidently come to the station to see her off.

'Oh, Hester,' exclaimed the one nearest to her, 'how I do envy you!' and her longing looks emphasized her words. 'It has been the dream of my life to see New York City.'

'Courage, Julia,' replied Hester. 'It is the unexpected that happens, you know, so you may yet have your heart's desire when least you look for it.'

Hester Olney boarded the train amid a chorus of good-byes, and as long as the girls were visible she waved her farewell from the car window in response to theirs. But presently a sharp curve in the road hid them from sight, and for a moment a tinge of homesickness came over her, and a few, yes, a very few tears stole furtively down her cheek as she leaned her head against the side of the car. It was so hard leaving the girls.

But not long did Hester give way to this feeling of depression. She was naturally of a very buoyant disposition, and this long anticipated journey was really a great delight to her, and it was no small part of the pleasure that she had been entrusted to take it alone. When the invitation had first come to Hester from her married sister in New Jersey to come and spend the summer vacation at her delightful cottage in Atlantic City, Mr. Olney had fully intended accompanying his young daughter as far as New York. But at the last moment business cares made it imperative he should remain at home, and, rather than disappoint Hester, he had decided to let her go by herself, having first telegraphed to his son-in-law when she would start from home, and receiving an answering telegram that her sister's husband would meet her in New York. There would be no change of cars until she reached the latter place, so it seemed there would be no risk whatever in sending her alone, although she was but fourteen years of age.

During the first hours of the journey there was much to occupy Hester's attention in the unfamiliar and beautiful scenery all about her, and in the constant change of passengers at the different stations. Noon-time came almost before she was aware, and, after partaking of the dainty lunch prepared by her mother's loving hands, she drew a book from her hand-bag and was soon absorbed in its contents. The train was express nearly all the last half of the way, and its ceaseless, monotonous whirr, combined with an over-tired head from the constant watching of the morning, induced a feeling of drowsiness in Hester, which culminated in a nap. How long she slept she knew not, but she was suddenly awak-

ened by the stopping of the train to find herself at the Grand Central Depot in New York city. As the hundreds of passengers emerged from the train, Hester followed the crowd, and gazed anxiously about her if anywhere she might catch a glimpse of her brother-in-law. But failing to find him in the vast throng, she took her way to the ladies' room, according to instructions, there to await his coming. The immense depot was filled with the countless multitude of summer tourists going in every direction, and Hester saw much to interest her in the novel scenes about her.

She had noticed by the big clock in the station that it was just five o'clock as she entered the waiting-room, so she knew her train had come in very nearly on time—a

Hester was a brave girl despite her youthful years, and she strove hard to keep her fears in check. Moreover, she was a child of the King, and the tiny silver cross she wore showed she belonged to the order known as 'The King's Daughters.' Straightway the Father sent a swift-winged messenger to comfort his troubled child.

'What time I am afraid I will trust in thee,' whispered the angel visitant. Hester's face lighted up with a smile as the familiar text floated through her mind. Already she was strengthened. Lifting her eyes toward the door she beheld a tall, broad-shouldered policeman pacing to and fro, and every time he came in her direction she observed he regarded her intently. He had a kindly face, and instinctively Hester



STOP!

rather unusual circumstance, she had been told—so she was quite prepared not to have her brother-in-law meet her promptly. But when the hands pointed to 'six' o'clock, she was surprised beyond measure. A whole hour had passed almost before she knew it, and yet her brother-in-law had not come. Where could he be? Not as yet gravely anxious, inasmuch as she had been forewarned of his possible tardiness, she yet felt a vague uneasiness and wished with all her heart he would come. Eagerly scanning the ever-changing crowd, feeling that each succeeding moment must bring him, another hour passed by more slowly than the first, until the clock struck seven. Hester was now thoroughly alarmed. The ever-moving throng was thinning perceptibly, and she was very weary with the long journey, and the strain of constant watching. Would her brother-in-law never come! Eight o'clock! Hester's heart beat fast and hard, and the tears began to fall. It looked as though she might have to pass the night in that great, dreary place. But

felt confidence in him. She resolved to seek his advice if still her brother failed to come.

Some one else was watching Hester. An elegantly but somewhat showily dressed lady had entered the waiting-room some time before, and for a long while all unknown to Hester, had been silently observing her anxiety and distress. When the lady saw her wiping away the tears that would come in spite of her efforts to be brave, she crossed over to Hester and asked softly, 'Are you in any trouble, my child? Can I help you?'

Completely won by the gentle, sympathizing tone, and inexpressibly relieved, Hester explained the situation. The lady was full of pity and insisted that Hester should accompany her to her own home for the night, assuring her that they could look up her brother in the morning. The young girl gratefully accepted the offer and had already left the waiting-room in company with her new-found friend when a stern voice suddenly bade them 'Stop!' Turning in amazement to the speaker, Hester beheld