

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Vision.

I saw a vision strangely fair,
For modern days to claim;
Though fancy oft had pictured it,
I deemed it but a name.
Yet there before my eyes it stood,
The pure, untarnished pearl
Of lovely, budding womanhood,
A dear, old-fashioned girl!

Her manners, like her speech, were sweet
As music's rhythmic flow;
She did not startle you with style
Or greet you with 'Hullo!'
Yet hat and gown did so agree
With charm of face and curls
I wondered why we do not see
More dear, old-fashioned girls.

—Zitella Cocke, in the 'Christian Endeavor World.'

Her Talent For Christ.

You see, Madge was one of the brightest, merriest of girls. Her young life had been passed in having a good time generally. And how could she help being a favorite with almost everybody, with her bright, responsive face and frank, pleasing manner, with never a bit of self-consciousness about her? It seemed as if the sun shone to please her, and the birds sang for her, and the flowers bloomed for her to pick. Ever since she was a little tot she had been a child of out-of-doors. Upon awakening in the morning it seemed as if every voice of nature were calling her out. The waving grasses of the field, the robins in the cherry trees, the breezes from the far-away hills, the merry sunshine,—all seemed to beckon her to join them. The first spring days made her wild with delight.

At breakfast-time she would come in breathless from her early tramp to the woods laden with dewy flowers and vines for the parlor vases, and during the meal she would entertain the grown-up people with tales of her exploits and discoveries on her early rambles.

To the amusement of her parents she took possession of the whole country round about, and spoke of her pine grove, and of her old willow, and of her brook where her cardinal flowers bloomed in October. Having few playmates she found companionship in the great out-of-door world about her; and storm clouds and lightning flashes often drew her out to the hillside when the flowers were hidden in the shadows. Household duties, though not neglected, were despatched that she might have more time for her outside plans.

Before she was old enough to go alone her father had held her tiny hand in her walks, at the same time telling her of the Christ child who used to love the hills and flowers about Nazareth; and all along through her childhood he had taught her sweet lessons of God from the pages of nature's open book. As Madge grew older she developed a talent for sketching, and would spend hours under her artist's umbrella, trying to catch the morning light on the hillside where her sheep were feeding, or in copying the haziness about the river, where her sheep were feeding, or in copying the haziness about the river, where her pond lilies slept. Long before she had thought of attempting to put on canvas the scenes about her, her love of sunlight and shadow had also taught her many of nature's secrets. Her teacher soon saw that she would excel in the landscapes, and her father, that she might enjoy and sketch new wonders of nature, took her

to Switzerland. There, for the first time in her life, she was surrounded by a circle of young friends of her own age, and merry times they all had, climbing the Alps, crossing glaciers, and studying with Swiss artists. And there, where the world looked more beautiful to her than ever before, Madge had her first glimpse of its great need and wretchedness; for in the Swiss party there happened to be one of God's workers from Eastern Turkey, who was spending a few months among the Alps in search of needed rest and change. This lady's sympathy for young life had attracted Madge to her, and the two enjoyed many a long day together, exploring mountain heights. One day, after a hard climb to one of the greatest waterfalls, they nestled down in the shade of a mountain-side, among a clump of Alpine rose bushes, and there Madge drew from her friend the history of her life in the East, and was surprised beyond measure to learn of the misery and wretchedness of the poor people in that far-away land. The story of the oppression and suffering borne by heathen women opened her eyes to a new and wholly different life from her own, and for the first time she seemed to wake up to the idea that she might be required of her. As she looked out and away from her cozy mountain lodgment, her thoughts went far beyond the opposite snowy peaks, and our Alpine climber did a deal of thinking in a small space of time.

During the next few weeks her face was a study to her friends. She often found herself looking at life more earnestly, and longing to be accomplishing something, and to spend her energy on some one outside of self. Her past life looked like one of supreme selfishness to her. As her new friend told her of her plans for the next year, and of the enormous work expected of her in connection with the new girls' boarding school, Madge, in her impulsive way, wished to go back with her, and said perhaps God intended her to be just there. She was ready and willing to leave her home, and give her life to the work.

But her father and mother knew more of such a life than she did, and felt that the time for her to go as a missionary had not come. She came back to America with memories of her new-made friend and her work. She happened to be in Boston when Mrs. Moses Smith gave one of her delightful talks to young ladies, and there she learned how those who could not go to do this foreign work, might help almost as much by sending money. Discouraged at the thought that she had no money of her own, and not wishing to ask her father for any, she queried: 'How can I earn anything? Some of my friends are earning their living by type-writing, and telegraphy, and teaching, but I can't do any of those. I wonder,' and here a bright look came into her eye, 'I wonder if I could make my brushes foreign missionaries!' Her friends discouraged her in this thought, but she had a mind of her own, and tried. This was the small beginning of what was not so small in the end. The friends Madge made on her return to America were interested in various plans, and were surprised that it was difficult to get her to join in their clubs. 'Too busy,' was her excuse. Resolved to see what she was up to, they called at her house and found her in her den, as she called her studio, engrossed in work.

Odd bits of paper, strewn on the floor or pinned on the walls, showed most fascinating bends of rivers, old bridges, hay fields, and wood interiors. At this particular moment Madge was at work, in pen and ink, upon a

book-cover design, putting the dearest little landscape into a frame of pussy willows. To her friends' question as to why she was confining herself so closely to her studio, she told them she was working for a firm in Boston.

As her father had more than enough to make his daughter happy and comfortable, her own friends could not understand why such a girl should be working as hard as she seemed to be doing. Then she told them her secret,—that she was earning money to send way off to Turkey, to help some poor Armenian girls in school.

I am afraid these friends did not fully appreciate it all; but as Madge went on with her work, and tasted the delight of direct service for the Master, life became grander and more noble to her; and as she told so sweetly her plan of work, her friends gradually thought it would be pleasant to do the same thing, and each in her own way put some talent to service, and all were surprised to find how much more blessed it was to give than to receive.

And the Armenian girls were no losers by all this. The success which these young workers had was really 'quite like a book,' as Madge said; and she added, 'If our wills are wholly given up to God, certainly he will put us in right places and direct us to do his work. Now I think that a young girl who can't go on a foreign mission can do some good at home; don't you?—Life and Light.'

The Story of a Letter.

'Off to work so early?'

James stopped in passing a boy who, like himself, was one of the workers on a large ranch. Caleb's stumpy figure was bending over a table in the rough back-porch, and his face was drawn into a pucker which told that his task was no easy one.

'Yes, it's early, I know, but it's mail day to-morrow, and I thought I'd send a letter.'

'Folks back east?' asked James.

'Well, I haven't got many folks. Ain't so well off as you are. It's my stepmother; but she is a good woman, and she likes to hear from me, and I think I ought to.'

No one ever thought of taking Caleb for an exemplar in anything. He was slow and very clumsy in his movements, and never dreamed of making a suggestion of duty to any one. But it had come to be observed that Caleb could be relied on.

'If you look for him where he belongs he is sure to be there,' his employer had been heard to say. And some of the boys noticed that Caleb's quiet 'I think I ought to,' always referred to something he was sure to do.

James had intended calling upon Caleb for assistance in the turning of water into the irrigating ditch, upon which the crops so largely depended; but he now turned away and went by himself, with a weight at his heart and a shadow upon his brow. If asked the reason for it he might have been slow to admit to any one else that it was called there by a consciousness of neglect of duty, but it was very plain to himself.

'Just a stepmother. If Caleb thinks it's a matter of "ought" to write to her about every mail day, I wonder what he'd do if he had a mother and a father and a sister. Heigho! I didn't expect to be gone three years when I got mad and quit.'

In the early springtime James had been seized with a spasm of remorse at his long, cruel neglect of those who loved him, and to