

BOYS AND GIRLS

In the Light of Truth.

(By George Madden Martin, in the 'Youth's Companion.')

Anne looked about the class-room. She was a new pupil, and was wondering which of the many would prove the interesting girls.

She based her liking for people on the degree to which they were interesting. At least this was her way of putting it. Not even to herself would she have acknowledged that they were interesting according as they were fine—fine in the sense of fashion and of show. For Anne secretly longed to be fine.

Matilde was fine. She attracted Anne. She wore charming clothes, and she wore them with an air. Perhaps Anne envied her the air more than the clothes. And Matilde made incidental mention of appointments with the dressmaker.

Anne soon learned about Matilde. She and her father and her older sister came down from their sugar-plantation for the winters, that Matilde might attend school and that her sister might attend society. Every girl in school had something to tell about the sister. She was a belle, and her goings and her comings were ever in the newspapers.

Anne came down from an adjoining parish, too, for school, going home every Friday to stay until Monday. Only an unusual price for the cotton-crop made it possible for her this year at the Gray College Preparatory School. When the year ended—well, there were two scholarships open to the pupils of the school, and Anne was ambitious. She was also a student and a worker.

But just now her ambition centred on things social. She had made up her mind that Matilde would be a charming friend. But beside being a leader in her set, Matilde was, perhaps, a mocker at things serious and earnest.

On first meeting Anne she had given her a preoccupied smile. She evidently had many and large interests outside of those of school. Her conversation chiefly concerned a dancing club and a schoolgirl box party for a matinée.

Presently conversation turned upon the coming recitation in mathematics. Matilde gave a dramatic shrug.

'I haven't a problem solved!' she declared. 'Not that I mind algebra. I haven't had time. However,' Matilde's laugh was provokingly charming, 'there's nothing like establishing the reputation you mean to sustain.'

Anne, on the outskirts of the group, felt nettled. Matilde seemed to make light of worth and work and achievement.

'Really?' Anne said. 'I can't imagine any one willingly taking an inferior place at anything—'

Matilde flushed. It was perhaps a new point of view to her. She turned and looked at this newcomer.

Anne bore the scrutiny well; she was pretty.

The two girls happened to be near each other when they were going in from recess. 'I have the problems solved here, if you care to look at them,' said Anne. 'It's a mere detail to work them out, anyhow, when you've got the principle.'

'Why, thank you—I should like to,' said Matilde. 'I really meant to do them, but went to a dance, and—well—just didn't,'

Matilde, flushed and grateful, was more charming than ever.

She was clever, too. She studied the paper up the stairs and into the schoolroom and through the roll-call. When her time came, she rose with a smiling readiness and made a clever recital of her gleanings. Going out at dismissal, she slipped an arm through Anne's.

The next day she asked Anne to drive with her in her father's carriage. She also asked and received permission to take Anne home to dine. Matilde's sister appeared in a bewildering gown of trailing gauziness. With a preoccupied good-by, she bade them

to Anne it was only fine—the glitter, the show, the form.

Afterwards Anne gazed at the books in the library, although she was used to books. Then, as if reminded, she asked: 'Our themes for to-morrow—have you written yours.'

Matilde made a little mouth. 'Haven't thought of it. I hate to work. I'll scribble off something in study hour to-morrow,' and her shrug indicated that deeper concern over such a matter was not worth while.

Matilde's estimate of these things of such moment to Anne, her assumption that carriages at beck and call, servants, a fine house, were common to all persons who were



MATILDE, FLUSHED AND GRATEFUL, WAS MORE CHARMING THAN EVER.

be 'good children,' and left in the carriage for some more festive dining elsewhere.

Matilde's father was silent and dark, and hardly glanced at his daughter's guest. Afterward Anne told Matilde that he looked sad.

'Sad,' the girl replied. 'Who? Father? O Anne, how absurd!'

It was a servants' meal, just as it was a servants' house. There was profusion, but there was also laxity and carelessness. But

anything at all—this point of view seemed to Anne to put her at a disadvantage. Matilde seemed to have no idea that cleverness and ability played any part. Anne decided to make her feel their advantages.

'But so many are good in English it would never do to fall so far down in rank. Write it now; I'll help you.'

They did it then; that is, Anne wrote and Matilde bit her pencil and praised. 'And you are not like most of the smart ones,