

tually a blot on the landscape, there could be no denying that it might be so considered by a correct aesthetical taste; but that meeting-house suggested the minister, and the minister suggested the minister's weary wife, with her class of half-tamed Arabs; and that again suggested the fact that she, Rhoda Ormond, had absolutely refused to lift finger or open lips to help one of God's 'little ones.' And so the chain of sequence ran on until it came back to the morning's verse, 'Even Christ pleased not himself.'

'Pshaw!' said Rhoda, aloud this time. What a convenient word that is! It isn't swearing, of course, to say 'Pshaw!' At the same time, it satisfies the demand that most people feel now and then for the use of an expletive of some sort. 'Pshaw! This thing is getting on my nerves. I don't see why I should think so much about it. It's all right. I've done nothing but what other people are doing all the time. There's my mother, good as she is, who will hardly ever take a class in Sunday school, even for a day; and my father never thinks of even going to Sunday school, much less teaching in it. Get some sense in you, Rhoda. Guess you've got a right to do as you please once in a while, especially up here in the woods.'

And, turning away from the new spoiled view before her, she opened her Bible, and sought to interest herself in its pages.

Scarcely, however, had she succeeded in shutting out the troublesome thoughts which had so bothered her when the bell began to ring for the morning service. It was a cheap little bell, naturally shrill and unmusical of tone, and made all the more so by the unmistakable fact that it was cracked. Down at the hotel the high-strung dames of sensitive nerves put their fingers in their ears while it rang, and said one to another: 'Isn't it awful? Did you ever hear anything like it?'

Colonel Carter, of Baltimore, out for his morning stroll, said to the first man he met after the tintinnabulation began, 'Here, my man; I'll give you five dollars if you'll have that bell stopped, and not rung again to-day.'

But Henry Jackson (he was a deacon in the little church, but of course the Colonel didn't know that) drew himself up, and there was the light of generations of God-fearing ancestors in his eye as he answered without smiling: 'Guess not, sir! Five dollars 'll do a lot of things up here, but it won't stop th' ringin' of th' bell fr' th' worship of th' Lord on Sunday. Sorry you don't like it, but I guess you'll hev to stan' it fr' a spell.'

Up under the pines the girl shuddered as the inharmonious jangling first broke upon her ear. Then she set herself to bear it unflinchingly. What did it matter, after all? Her Sabbath was spoiled already, and another little thing like this didn't count.

Presently from ringing the bell fell to tolling; and as she listened this is what she heard it beat out persistently and solemnly on the still morning air: 'Ev-en Christ pleased not him-self!'

Over and over it said it; now emphatically, sharply, and with a certain note of authority,—that must have been when the sexton put a little more muscle into his work,—and again softly, plaintively, persuasively, and in a way almost to bring tears to the eyes—'Ev-en Christ pleased not him-self!' until at last it trailed off through the path of lessening echoes into silence. And, when it was quite done, Rhoda Ormond rose from the ground, gathered up her belongings, and started for the hotel.

'No use!' she said with a whimsical little laugh. 'I can't play prodigal even if I want to. I've just got to be good, and go and help that poor minister's wife out. Now don't go to putting on airs, my lady, and thinking no end of yourself for your kindness, and expecting a blessing for it, and all that. You know you're a selfish thing, and that you don't want to do it one bit, and that you wouldn't if you could get out of it and be half-way decent about it. But when a measly little cracked church bell begins to quote Scripture at you, it's time you listened and minded what it says. So go along with you, and do your duty!'

What with the changing of her dress, and the hasty review of the lesson, already familiar to her, morning service was well-nigh over when she reached the church, and slipped into a seat near the door to listen to the

last words of the sermon Bert Langley, drawn to the service by some influence to him unaccountable, from his corner saw her as she entered, and chuckled softly.

'What did I tell you? I knew she would come to it. She couldn't help it. And yet—I wonder just what it was that made her do it?' And the serious look that came into his brown eyes was certainly not brought there by any words of the preacher, now in his closing appeal.

Sunday school followed immediately upon the morning sermon, and the little company that remained grouped itself into a half-dozen classes. The minister's wife came in, bringing her two little children with her. They were too young either to bring to church or to leave alone; consequently, she explained, she was obliged to remain at home from the earlier service, and to take them with her to the Sunday school.

If Rhoda had any lingering idea of assuming the pose and acting the role of a martyr to duty, it passed away at the sight of that thin, tired face, and the relief that passed over it when she said: 'Mr. Hunt was good enough to ask me to take some of your work this summer, and I'm going to do it on condition that you give yourself as much rest as you possibly can. And the first thing I want you to do is to leave the babies here, and go up to the top of that little hill yonder, and sit down under that big maple, and stay there until school is done. No,' as Mrs. Hunt began to protest, 'there's no going back on the conditions. Mr. Hunt,' she continued, loud enough for those about to hear, 'if I take Mrs. Hunt's class, isn't it only fair that she shall do what I say?'

And the young man, without knowing what had been said, but dimly understanding that all unexpectedly through this bright-faced girl light and help were coming to his wife, answered promptly: 'Why, yes, of course; that's only fair, Emily, you must do as Miss Ormond says.'

And out of the door of the church, right under the disapproving gaze of Deacon Studivant and Mrs. Knight, the president of the Ladies Aid, the little minister's wife passed to the first absolutely free, unencumbered hour of rest and enjoyment that she had had for many a day.

Seven boys, from thirteen to fifteen years of age, solemnly faced the new teacher when the school was opened. Freckled of face, bare of feet, jacketless some of them, full of mischief, all of them, Rhoda's heart sank a little when she first sized them up; then she drew a long breath, and squared herself for the occasion.

The lesson was on the boyhood of Daniel in Babylon, and so effectively was it taught that on the way home two fist-fights were the direct results of it, Bill Hen Gray and Simmy Carey coming to blows because Bill Hen openly said that 'there wa'n't never sech a guy es thet Dan'l,' which heresy Simmy set himself to correct by mauling Bill Hen in a masterly manner; while the other pair of combatants squared off to settle the question whether she said Dan'l was alive at the present time or not, Dick Martin affirming that he was 'daid' long ago, while John Lawton contended that the way the teacher told the story showed that Dan'l was alive now, mebbe a feller thet she knowed down Bost'n or N' York way; wist he'd asked her what his last name was.

Time will not permit the telling in detail of the story of that summer; nor, indeed, is there much that could be put into words. Possibly only the minor and the least significant things in life ever get into speech, anyhow. Having put her hand to the plough, Rhoda Ormond would not turn back. Possibly it would be too much to say that she never wished to turn back, for human nature has its limitations, even when wrought upon by grace. It was not always easy on a beautiful Sunday to turn from the gladness and glory of the great world of out-of-doors, and spend an hour in a bare, stuffy room, wrestling with the ignorance and indifference, not to say the restlessness and waywardness, of a lot of youngsters who seemed to have not the slightest glimmer of an idea of the sacrifice which was being made for them. And the Junior meetings on Sunday afternoons were even more of a tax. But still Rhoda Ormond held to her self-imposed task, with all the persistency of her nature, until the very last day of her stay in Daleton.

Yet there were rewards and compensations. The minister's wife, relieved of a portion of

her care, lost the tired look from her eyes, and picked up flesh and spirits, and into her cheeks came again a bit of that rosy pink that had captivated the heart of a certain theological student not many years before. And the social meetings of the church took on new life and interest with this skilled musician at the organ, backed up by the little company of singers from the hotel whom she inveigled into accompanying her to almost every mid-week service.

And Rhoda will never forget that last Sunday, when, after bidding her good-by in the constrained, half-ashamed, wholly indifferent manner of boys, Bill Hen Gray and Sam Tucker waylaid her on her way back to the hotel to tell her, with many stammerings and much confusion, that they were much obliged t' her fr' all she'd done fr' 'em thet summer, 'n'—'n'—more stammerings and hesitation here—that they'd 'bout made up their minds, both on 'em, thet they were goin' t' turn right round, 'n' try t' serve th' Lord best, they knowed how. And yet she had thought these two the hardest and most unconcerned of the lot! How humble she felt because her faith had been so small! yet how exalted, in the consciousness of fruit from her labors!

And there was something else, too. At parting Bert Langley held her hand rather longer than was absolutely necessary, while he said: 'I won't say good-by, Miss Ormond, for I'm coming to see you just as soon as mother and I go back to town. I have something that I want to say to you then.' And the significant tone brought the roses into my lady's cheek. 'But that will keep. But I should like you to know something of what you have done for me this summer. By your unselfishness and your devotion to what you thought was duty you have made me feel as never before the reality of the Christian life, and to want it. I hardly dare make any promises, but I thought you'd like to know that I'm trying to follow the Master.'

'Well, childie,' said the pastor in the first talk they had together after Rhoda's return, 'what about "the far country," and how did you like "husks"?''

But she shook her head merrily, although there was a serious look in her eye.

'Dadda Black,' she said, 'I haven't been in "the far country" at all; I just couldn't get there, and have been in the Father's house all summer. As for "husks," I haven't even had a taste of them. Yes, I have, too,' as a sudden memory of that first Sunday under the Great Pines came to her, 'just one wee, little, teeny, tonty taste; but that was enough! I don't want any more! Husks are puckery and sour; they're horrid!'

And she told him the story of the summer.

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