

The Face in the Glass.

Two large, mournful eyes, straight brown hair combed back from a high forehead, dark skin and a sad little mouth—that was what Em'ly Caroline saw every time she looked in the glass that hung over the teacher's desk at school. Em'ly hated that glass, and she hated the face in it, too.

It was a bare little schoolroom, containing only a big, ugly stove, many battered benches, the teacher's desk, and blackboards all around the room, with examples on them that made Em'ly Caroline sick at heart to look at, because they were so hard to understand.

All the other children went home to their dinner, but Em'ly Caroline lived too far away. So there she stayed a whole hour all alone, with that mournful little face in the glass for company. Sometimes she sat down and cried after taking a look, and once in a great while she boldly made a face at it. It was her very own face, Em'ly Caroline knew that well enough; and she never wondered that the teacher lost patience with her or that the scholars made fun of her.

The night when Em'ly's Cousin Rosabelle was coming to make a visit the aunts were invited over to tea. The stage happened to be late; and, as the aunts were obliged to go home early, they all sat down to supper before Rosabelle and her mother arrived. Em'ly Caroline couldn't have told afterward what was on the table.

"They say Rosabelle's real smart with her books," said Em'ly's mother. "I suppose she's way ahead of Em'ly Caroline."

The hot blood rushed all over Em'ly's face, for everybody at the table knew how dull she was.

"Well," sniffed Aunt Bathia. "I can assure you that Rosabelle's mother never had to drive her to school. She's always ready and glad to go."

Em'ly Caroline kept her eyes on her plate and tried hard to swallow what was in her mouth. She remembered very well once, when Aunt Bathia was there visiting, she had sat down on the roadside and cried instead of hurrying along to school. Aunt Bathia had caught her at it, and Em'ly knew she had never forgotten.

"Rosabelle's a real pretty child," said aunt Sue, "and I don't know's I ever heard her cry."

"Em'ly Caroline wouldn't have looked up then and met those two pairs of scornful eyes for the world."

"Pity Em'ly couldn't take lessons of her cousin Rosabelle," brother James remarked; and then, just as Em'ly was longing to creep away under the table, she heard a knock at the door, and there was Rosabelle and her mother.

Em'ly Caroline had never seen anything so beautiful as her cousin Rosabelle. She had white skin and pretty light curls, her eyes were blue; and she walked right round the table and kissed everybody without being told. Em'ly Caroline couldn't take her eyes off

of her. Rosabelle wasn't one bit afraid of all the strangers; not even when everybody was looking at her, and talking about her; and when Em'ly father and brother James asked Rosabelle questions, she spoke up as quickly and laughed as Em'ly had never dreamed of laughing.

"Seems to me your Em'ly Caroline's a dreadful sober little piece, isn't she?" asked Mrs. Tenny, Rosabelle's mother, "not much like my Rosabelle."

"No, she isn't much like Rosabelle," sighed Em'ly's mother.

"Terrible dark, isn't she?" said Mrs. Tenny.

"Yes, she's dark," admitted Em'ly's mother with another sigh.

"Who does she take after? I can't see as she favors any of our folks."

Everybody began to talk about Rosabelle now, and Em'ly Caroline took a long breath of relief.

The next day after Rosabelle came Mrs. Tenny decided to send her to school with Em'ly Caroline. "I guess I won't have her go but half a day," she said to Em'ly's mother. "I think that's enough for her this spring."

Em'ly was happier to have Rosabelle's company, and she walked in the grass all the way to school, so that Rosabelle might have the path. At the schoolhouse the children crowded around them, and were very kind to Em'ly because she was Rosabelle's cousin. Miss Smith, who was almost always cross, smiled whenever she looked at Rosabelle.

Em'ly's days would have been quite happy now if only Rosabelle could have stayed with her through the noon hour; but every day she tripped away, leaving Em'ly Caroline with the same old things to look at—the big stove, the blackboards, the empty benches. Em'ly felt as if they all knew she was dark and homely and dull.

But changes come into everybody's life, even into a little lonely schoolgirl's. One bright, sunny day, after long days of rain, Em'ly and Rosabelle were on their way to school. Suddenly they looked up and spied a field of buttercups. Rosabelle had never picked buttercups in her life, and after she had picked one bunch she wanted to pick another. Em'ly helped her, and then urged her to hurry because it was almost school time.

"I don't want to go to that old school. I don't like it," said Rosabelle, decidedly.

Em'ly Caroline stared at her.

"No, and I'm not going," continued Rosabelle. "I'm just going to pick these flowers. It isn't my school, anyway."

"But you didn't ask your mother," said Em'ly.

"I don't care," replied Rosabelle. And then Em'ly trued off to school alone. At night when she came into the yard, Rosabelle met her. "Don't tell 'em that I didn't go to school, will you? They didn't ask me a word, and they don't know."

Em'ly stared at Rosabelle, and shook her head. "No, I won't tell," she said, and then fell to thinking.

At the supper table something happened that made Em'ly Caroline think harder than ever.

"Where'd you get all those buttercups, Rosabelle, you brought home this noon?" asked Aunt Sue, who was there spending the day. "I didn't see one on the road when I came along. Must have taken an hour to pick them."

Rosabelle looked at Em'ly Caroline, and then spoke up just as if she were telling the truth. "The children gave them to me," she said.

"Didn't they give you any, Em'ly Caroline?" asked Aunt Sue.

"No, they didn't," said Em'ly.

"Rosabelle was always a favorite," said Mrs. Tenny.

Em'ly didn't look at Rosabelle once during supper. No, nor during breakfast next morning. It seemed to her that Rosabelle's pretty face must be all spoiled, and she couldn't bear to look at her.

At noon, when she was alone again, she climbed up and looked at the face in the glass. It was a straightforward gaze that she met, and Em'ly looked at the face a long time. At length she spoke to it, "You wouldn't lie, would you?" said Em'ly Caroline. And the big dark eyes and the little firm mouth, and even the nose and the high forehead seemed to say, "No! No! No!"

"I'll never make faces at you again," said Em'ly, "never."

"Certainly not," said the face.

"I won't cry about you, either."

"I'd be ashamed to have you," said the face.

It was strange, perhaps, but Em'ly wasn't afraid that noon, and she climbed up and looked out of the window and watched the trees, and the birds, and the spring blossoms. She wasn't afraid when school began, either; and she answered questions very well, indeed.

Even Aunt Sue and Aunt Bathia noticed a change in Em'ly Caroline. "I wouldn't wonder if the child turned out all right, after all," they said one day.

"Oh, Em'ly Caroline isn't the worst child that ever lived," said grandmother.

Em'ly looked up quickly. "How'd you know, grandmother?" The question came out before Em'ly Caroline thought.

"Why, child," said grandmother, "you didn't suppose you were, did you?"

Em'ly shook her head. "I used to," she said, "but I don't now." And that was every word Em'ly Caroline would say on the subject. She kept her word to the face in the glass, and never made faces at it or cried over it any more.—[Frances J. Delano, in the Congregationalist.]

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