

I looked at Elsa with admiration. How wise she was to know that she was happier with her own kind and to arrive at that conclusion without any resentment or bitterness.

Elsa was one of the five girls to whom I taught English when they lived with us. Teaching them was no labour and they paid me back a hundred fold in devoted service, the service that cannot be bought with money, but even apart from that, I had great pleasure in seeing their minds unfold, with that spark of illumination which every teacher craves. After Elsa had learned to read English quite well I gave her a copy of Sara Teasdale's poem:

"They brought me with a secret glee
The news I knew before they spoke,
And though they hoped to see me riven
They found me light as oak leaves driven,
Before the storm that splits the oak."

I was delighted to see how it affected her. She saw herself in it and she saw more than that. She saw she was not alone. Other people had had to stand up to the ordeal of false friends. She committed the poem to memory and in trying to explain to me how much she liked it, she said:

"These words fit me like this," locking her hands together.

Women as a rule are not good employers; indeed they are notoriously poor employers, but I believe this current shortage of domestic help is having an influence. People are learning to know each other. I hope that even now some haughty dames are learning wisdom in the sweat of their brows and in the smarting of their chapped hands. Wisdom is often costly but it is always worth the price.