

A CHANCE WORD.

Myra Sydney was sitting in the window of her little parlor watching the slow rising of a storm over the opposite sky.

Many an autumn sun had she watched from her front windows; many a soft spring rain and whirling snow storm.

The room in which Myra Sydney sat expressed its owner's tastes, whether meant to do as a parlor, or in respect of size or color.

There was something wistful in the face, which touched Myra Sydney. "It will be time wasted, I dare say," she said to herself.

Everything had a use. No trifles yielded for unwary guests in the shape of minute tables, Queen Anne or otherwise, laden with trumpery biscuit or Sevres, and ready to upset with a touch.

The clock struck seven. The black cloud had crept to the zenith, and now a strong gust of wind swept from beneath it, bringing on its wings the first drop of rain.

"It's two girls with a parcel, Miss Myra," said Esther, the parlor-maid. "They'd like to speak with you, they say."

Miss Sydney went out into her little entry. The girls, about the same age, wore of the unmistakable shop girl type.

"Yes'm. My Snow said he wasn't sure which of the under-waists it was you took so he sent both kinds, and you will try them on, please?"

"Certainly. Are you to wait for them?"

"Yes'm." Miss Sydney made what haste she could, but before she returned the rain was falling in torrents.

"She has," replied one of the girls, with an embarrassed giggle. "I'm pretty near by, and the horse car runs right in front of the door."

Miss Sydney glanced at the shoes—cheap, paper-soled boots, with a dusty velvet bow sewed on the toe of each, and the too, concluded that by all means, "Come in here, please," leading the way into the parlor.

The girl thrust the velvet bowed shoes which gaped for lack of buttons, out to the fire, and, half from embarrassment, held up a hand to shade her face.

"To be sure I do. You look surprised. Ah, you think that because I have a little home of my own, and live in a pretty room, I must be a lady with nothing to do."

"I wish you'd tell me how you do, ma'am."

"I will, though I'm not in the habit of talking quite so freely about my affairs, but I'll tell you, because it may give you an idea of how to manage better for yourself. In the first place I

kept to two or three colors. I have a black gown or two, and an olive brown, and this yellowish green that you see, and some lighter ones, white or pale yellow. Now, with any one of these the same bonnet will do.

"Why, yes, it does seem so," said Cary, drawing a long breath. "I'd like to do something different myself, but I don't suppose I'd know how."

"No'm, I'd thank you."

"That's what mother used to say. And Mark, he always liked me best in a white bib apron. To be sure he never saw me in city clothes," she stopped, blushing.

"I think in his place I should prefer you to be different," said Miss Sydney, decidedly. "Now, Cary, don't be offended, but what you girls aim at is to look like the ladies who come to the shop, isn't it? 'stylish,' as you would say?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," admitted Cary. "Well, then, I must tell you the plain truth; you utterly fail in your attempt. No one would mistake a girl, dressed as you are at the moment, for a lady; nobody!—but—disregarding the deep flush on her companion's cheeks—if I went into a shop, and saw there a young lady as pretty and delicately made as you, Cary, with hair as smooth as satin, and a simple gown that fitted exactly, and a collar and cuffs as white as snow, and with neat shoes and nice stockings, if I saw a girl dressed like that, with nothing costly, nothing that any girl cannot have, but everything fresh, and neat and pretty, I should say to myself, 'There is a shop-girl with the true instincts of a lady.' And Cary, don't think me impertinent—if Mark came to town and saw a girl like that among the crowd of untidy, over-dressed ones at Snow & Asher's, I think the contrast would strike him as it would me—agreeably?"

Miss Sydney paused, looking down at her own dress. Cary looked steadily into the fire without speaking. The rain had ceased. Myra rose and threw back the blind, revealing the moon struggling through the edges of cloud. Cary followed her to the window. Her cheeks were a deep red, but there was a frank and grateful look in her eyes as she said:

"I must be going now, ma'am. You've been ever so good to let me stay. I shan't forget it, and—I guess you're about right."

"I wonder if I said the right thing, or have done the least good?" queried Miss Sydney, as she watched her guest depart.

It was some weeks before she had occasion again to visit Snow & Asher's, and she had half forgotten the little incident, when one day, entering the shop in quest of something, her attention was attracted by a face which beamed with sudden smiles at the sight of her. It was indeed Cary, but such a different Cary from the draggled vision of the wet evening. She still wore the blue dress, but the flounces had been ripped off, and the front was hidden by a black silk apron. The tangle of hair was smoothed like ordinary waves, a white hair with a knot of blue ribbon was round her neck; one of the objectionable rings had disappeared, and so had the yellow locket. So changed and so much prettier was the little maiden, that Miss Sydney scarcely knew her, till blush and smile pointed her out.

She waited on her customer with assiduity, and under cover of a box of ruffles they exchanged confidences. Did Miss Sydney think she looked better? She was so glad. The girls had laughed at her, at first, but not so much now, and her room mate, Ellen Morris, had

got herself an apron like hers. Miss Sydney left the shop with a pleasant amusement at her heart. She meant to go often, to keep a little hold on Cary, but circumstances, took her off to Florida, soon afterward, and it was late in April when she returned.

"That girl from Snow & Asher's was here to see you about a week ago, ma'am," said Esther, the evening after her arrival. "I told her you were expected Tuesday, and she said she would come again to-day, for she wanted to see particular, as she was going away. There she is now."

"It is Mark, Miss Sydney," she said, by way of introduction. Later, when Mark had walked over to the window to see the view, she explained further in a rapid undertone: "He came down two months ago while you were away, ma'am. I came out to tell you, but you were gone, and—day after to-morrow I'm—going back with him to Gilmanston. I told him he must bring me out to-night, for I couldn't leave here without saying goodbye to you."

"You are going to be married?"

"Yes—with a happy look—to-morrow morning. And oh, Miss Sydney, what do you think Mark says? He says if he'd found me looking like the rest of the girls at the store, with false hair, and jewelry and all that, he'd never in the world have asked me at all. And I did just look like that, you know. It was what you said that rainy night that made me change, and except for that nothing would have happened that has, and I shouldn't be the girl I am."

"Broad on the waters," thought Myra, as a little later she watched the lovers walk down the street. "Such a little crumb, and such wide waters, and yet it has come back! How impossible it seems, or would seem, if one did not have to believe that what we call chances and accidents, are God's opportunities, by which He allows us to lend a helping hand in His work, not quite understanding what we do, but knowing that guided by Him the smallest things end sometimes in great results."—[Sarah Coolidge in the Congregationalist.]

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kept to two or three colors. I have a black gown or two, and an olive brown, and this yellowish green that you see, and some lighter ones, white or pale yellow. Now, with any one of these the same bonnet will do. The one I am wearing now is black, with a little jet and pale yellow, and it goes perfectly well with all my dresses, and so does my black cashmere jacket, and my parasol and gloves, which are yellow also. Don't you see that there is an economy in this, and that if I had a purple dress and a blue one and a brown, I should want a different bonnet for each, and different gloves, and a different parasol?"

"Why, yes, it does seem so," said Cary, drawing a long breath. "I'd like to do something different myself, but I don't suppose I'd know how."

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