

The Story Page.

Just as they Come.

BY MRS. L. AMELIA WILDER.

Beth was perplexed; so she went to grandma. That is what she always did when she was in trouble, for Beth and grandma were very intimate.

"That's because they are so near of an age," said Jack, Beth's brother who liked to tease her, and Beth who exceedingly disliked being teased, answered curtly.

"I'll be glad when you're old enough to have a little sense." However, Beth never meant to trouble grandma with such a trifle as that.

"There, Beth's got another one of those old poky books," declared Joe as he saw her start for grandma's room with an old Sunday School book tucked under her arm.

"It's such a lovely book, grandma," affirmed Beth as she gave it into grandma's hands, "and all about work to be done in the world, and—O grandma, I do wish I could do some of it, something to make the world just a tiny bit better," she sighed as she watched grandma dreamily turning the leaves of the book.

"Yes, dear," answered grandma as though her thoughts were far away; then as her glance rested upon a certain sentence she read it over twice, marked the page carefully with a piece of yarn, then appearing to forget that Beth was waiting for advice, asked as she laid the book on the little old-fashioned light stand that held her Bible and workbasket, and always stood beside her easy chair:

"What was it that your mother wanted you to do this afternoon?"

"O, straighten up that catch-all box in her closet," answered Beth carelessly, "she wants to see if there are calico pieces enough to make a quilt for her bed—but I know there are not. You know we used them all, nearly, for that comfort for Joe's bed; and besides, grandma I don't feel like doing that now—I want to talk to you first anyhow," concluded Beth as she saw a look in grandma's eyes that caused her to think that, "not to feel like it was, perhaps, not the best reason for not complying with her mother's request; but it was only grandma's eyes that spoke. Beth continued, rather ambiguously,

"I think just as that book says, that the place we are in is the very place where we can find opportunities if we only look for them; and I've been looking, and I find so many things that I want to do, and I've made such lots of plans—but you see, grandma, there isn't anything to do with—if I only could earn a dollar, now, I know how I could make a lovely spread for mother's bed, and that would be work right here in my own home. I don't believe in going away off to find work when there's so much to be done near at hand; do you grandma?" she asked a trifle anxiously, as she thought she detected a hint of a smile in the kindly eyes, and remembered that it was, sometimes, a bit difficult to find out just what grandma did believe. But although Beth knew so little about grandma's beliefs, she knew a great deal about her help, so she waited patiently for what grandma would say.

It was not what Beth expected, nor, to tell the exact truth, not what she wanted her to say, as she remarked.

"I think, Beth, that your mother will be as well pleased if you do exactly as she requested, and perhaps we may find more pieces than you think. Ask Joe to help you bring the box in here and we will look it over together," and as she saw the cloud upon the usually sunny face she added gently, "It is work you want dear, remember; and we should learn that the first work that we have to do is in our own hearts, always, until we have learned to obey."

Beth's face wore a thoughtful, puzzled look as she returned with Joe. Carefully she carried the box between them until they reached the center of the room, when Joe contrived to upset the box with all its miscellaneous contents at grandma's feet, who—before Beth could frame the remonstrance that trembled on her lips, and which Joe was, evidently, expecting—exclaimed:

"That's right, now we can see just what we have to do at once."

Joe was somewhat nonplussed and said rather slowly, "I'll help you sort 'em if you want me to."

"Why, yes," came the pleasant answer, "if you have nothing else to do, it will be a good plan."

And Beth thought, as she saw how readily and cheerily Joe set himself at the task, that perhaps he would tease her less if she did not mind it so much.

Busily they worked and talked, and in half an hour Beth pointed triumphantly at a few pieces of point almost hidden by quantities of scraps of bleached and unbleached cotton, as she affirmed with unmistakable satisfaction, "I told you there was not pieces enough."

There was now, however, an unmistakable smile upon grandma's face, and Beth began to feel that for once grandma was laughing at her, and Joe went away whistling, "Blest be the tie that binds," in such a

rough manner, that in spite of all she could do, the young eyes that looked questioningly into the faded, kindly ones behind the spectacles, were bright with unshed tears; which, when grandma saw, she hastened to say, "Do not be discouraged, dearie, if all your plan for others do not meet with success so soon as you wish it. Let me read one sentence over again for you in your nice little book. Here it is," and grandma opened it as the place where she had laid the piece of yarn. "I am glad that you want to work for others, and your mother is the right one to begin with. Now let me read the words: 'Remember that the work is for God, and leave to him to choose the way.' Now are you willing that I should plan some work for you, Beth, until you have time to make your plans for earning money?" asked grandma.

"Why, yes; I think so," answered Beth a little slowly. And grandma continued: "I have learned that when I cannot do just the thing, I would like to do that it is a very good plan to do the 'next best thing,' and I think you will like my plan. Now wrap those skeins of blue em'roidery cotton with the cotton scraps, and the red with the unbleached, and lay them in my workbasket, and the stamping-outfit too," she added.

Then after this for many days Beth stamped patterns on the oddly-shaped scraps of bleached cloth—only a leaf or a flower or a butterfly on the smaller ones, sprays or clusters on the larger ones, and on one queer-shaped piece whose edges gave a good illustration of curves and angles, grandma asked her to put this sentence, "I will cover thee."

Although Beth had many times wished to ask grandma, as they worked, what she meant to do with the queer-shaped pieces, she had not done so; but now as she saw her joining the edges of the scraps and covering each seam with the old-fashioned herringbone-stitch, learned in her girlhood, she saw it all. Grandma's beautiful plan for a spread and a lesson as well, and exclaimed, "O, how nice! we take the pieces just as they come and embroider them, and make a pretty border around each one, and we have such a beautiful spread. Isn't that it, grandma?"

And grandma smiled and said, "Yes, dearie, and now can we not do the same with our lives? God gives the days—let us take them thankfully, just as they come—embroider them with true and loving deeds, edge them about with prayer, and they will be both useful and beautiful. And now do you not think we can make a spread for Joe's bed from the unbleached pieces and the red cotton?"

Brightly shone the eyes of Beth as she eagerly assented, and roughly suggested, "And let us put on the large center-piece, 'Blest be the tie that binds.'"

Grandma readily agreed to this proposition, and Joe laughed long and heartily when he saw it, and said, cordially, "I see you are learning to take things just as they come, Beth?"

And Beth realized that a good place to begin in our efforts to better the world is in our own hearts, and that no duty comes before the duty of obedience.—Christian Weekly.

Susan Ann's Thanksgiving

Yes, I kept Thanksgiving—through and through! and it overflowed into the next day; and here it is Saturday and it's Thanksgiving yet! Amanda Jenks came in on Wednesday, as I was flying round trying to get things a little for'ard, and she says, "Why, you don't expect to keep Thanksgiving yourself, do you?" And then she said something about being a servant and having nothing to be thankful for. Well, after she'd gone and the work was done and I sat doing nothing—only stoning raisins—it came into my mind about Gideon when God told him (just to keep up his courage) to go that night into the camp of the Midianites. He said: "Take Phurah, thy servant." That shows that God knew Phurah's name, and knew he was of use, and fit to go with his great captain. Like as not Phurah had hold of one end of that fleece Gideon wrung out. If you want to give a thing a real good squeeze it always takes two.

No one will forget the little maid that waited upon Naaman's wife. He carried the poor little thing away from her father and mother, and see what a good turn she did him! Cross old leper that he was! And there was that servant—the one St. Paul calls his "son"—I always have to think of O first—Onesimus. How Paul loved him! If the precious old man ever did get to see Philemon I warrant Onesimus made him up a good fire and had things comfortable for him.

Well, as I was turning over my Bible with a finger that wasn't sticky, I just happened to read this: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," and then I said to myself: "Well, Susan Ann, if you are a servant, I don't see but that you're in honorable company."

I have a slate now, Bobby brought it to me the other day. He said: "Susan Ann, you can have this, we are not to use slates in our school any more, they're not healthy." I told Bobby slates were never unhealthy when I went to school and I gave it a good washing with soap suds and hung it up by the window. It's very handy to reckon on. I took it down now and wrote up at the top in big letters: "Servant." I'll give thanks for that, I thought. "After this was straightened out in my mind, I ran up to see if the parlor hearth was all right. Wood fires are dreadful pretty to look at, but they do make a sight of work. Sakes alive! There sat Miss 'Liza in a blaze! I caught up the first thing—our new piano cover—and wound it around her. The flame was soon smothered, and wonderful to tell, she was not burned! It makes me tremble to think what might have been. You see, Miss 'Liza had lit the lamp and a piece of the match must have fallen in her lap; and there the dear soul sat, reading as peaceful as if nothing was happening. When we got quieted down a bit, and I went back to my kitchen, Bobby came in and he says: "Why, Susan Ann, what's the matter, you're crying?" And there, I do believe I was, for both my arms were blistered up to the elbow! So Miss 'Liza came with some of her soft old handkerchiefs and some salve, and wrapped them all up, and made me lie down for a spell. I never did know anything to work like that salve. It was just wonderful how it set me up. I just rose up and took down the slate and wrote: "Salve." That'll express the whole thing—and Miss 'Liza upstairs singing at her piano.

Between one thing and another, I was rather tucked out that night. I was just settled and thinkin' how good it felt to lie down, and how you'd rather have your own bed than Queen Victoria's when the biggest twin began to cry. Why twins were set to us, heaven only knows. I don't want to fly in the face of providence, but it does seem as if one could have got on with one baby at a time. Well, I said to myself: "Susan Ann, you ought to be ashamed to lie as though you had no hearing, and you know Miss 'Liza isn't strong." So up I gets for the baby. By this time one had woke the tother, and I took them both to the kitchen. You see, it keeps warm there all night. I made some mint tea, and cuddled them up a little, and they got comforted after a while and dropped off. I wish you could 'a' seen them. They do look uncommon pretty when they're asleep, and they're such helpless little creatures! Somehow, when I hugged them up to me, I just felt that they were little blessings. Would you believe it, before I carried them upstairs I just put them down on the cushion of my rocker, and wrote: "Twins" on my slate right under "Salve."

The next mornin', being Thanksgiving! I rose pretty early because I wanted to prink up a little. It takes a deal of time to do my hair when I wear that new bonnet. The water was frozen, and I always do think that makes a very refreshin' wash, with a good hard rub. After I was ready, I threw open the window, and it was just a picture! The sun was coming up over those hills yonder. First there was a faint streak of light, then, in a moment, a broader line of brightness, and then came the great ball of splendor. It had snowed in the night, and now the sun touched the tree tops, and every thing was so fresh, and sweet, and peaceful, I felt glad to be in such a beautiful world. As soon as I went downstairs I wrote down "Alive."

Well, I got things pretty well ahead by meetin' time, and I just slipped on my things and fit over to the church (we used to call it the meetin' house). It's very convenient to live near; at least, most times it is. I was too late for the anthem, but I can manage to do without that, and I was just in time to hear the text: give out. It was this: "In everything give thanks." I wish I could tell you all that blessed man said. He told us God had given us so many wonderful gifts, and because we had them right along we take them as a matter of course. We call them "common mercies," and forget to give thanks for them. When he was done and said: "Let us give thanks," I put down my head and I gave thanks for all the things I had on my slate and for a great many I never thought to put there.

That Thanksgiving dinner, if I do say it, was a great success. Miss 'Liza said: "Susan Ann, you really excelled yourself." After the company had gone, and I was cleared up and resting, and thinking, and wishing I had put just a little more flavoring in that sweet sauce, I looked up, and there stood John Evans in the door. "Why, John," said I, "how smart you look!" "Do I, Susan?" said he. "I thought when I bought this tie it would be the color you liked." So John sat down at one end of the table and I sat in my rocker at the end. "How rosy you are," Susan, said John, "that spot on your cheek is just the color of the apples on that first tree in my orchard." "Have some doughnuts, John," said I. While John was eating he drew up his chair, half-way the length of the table.

"Susan, do you school and I was stole into the school neck, and gave u Susan, and I have some, Susan."

"Why, John," "Mother's all some compan care of her, and t you to-night I wouldn't—well, I Don't you love m for you, that's a I think I'd improv Sue, I believe I wanted to go out Jane keeps a writ see you, I might When John tal into my throat! I kind of draught happened, but Jo then he kissed m cheek all night, then, well, we m married come sp but you see, I d all the beds, and [say nothing of is a likely man. has great black He's for'ard too. and now he will family is enough Ann Dyer, and After John went was full of thank sideways in turn and then I bigne Listen—sakes al is scream'ng to c Observer.

The How humbl ing the great ileged to prea knows but it the palace of C know, first tid of the Son of h This interesti of our mission "One of our business sellin officials for the would not tol now they dete until he is hui urge him to means a hard to witness for and vegetables says that the officials about of eunuchs fro visit to our mi 898

"Wou Mary is a d about what sh this respect. speaks and th late he is sorr One day he about someth He told Mary talked of it, t terribly harst comrade. So not true, but words. She "Would yo Ralph pau the rebuke fr wickedly and "No, I wo face. "Then I w "Oh, that if you had "I'd try to "When it's l long enough it won't be suct terrible