

The cold she had caught that night Miss Georgina did not throw off as easily as she thought she was going to, and a day or two later the milkman conveyed to Mr. Harden's housekeeper the news that the schoolmistress was ill with pleurisy.

An hour or two later the minister was at Miss Smale's door. From the little schoolhouse across the yard the hum of children's voices reached him.

"She cannot be so—mad!" he exclaimed, and his face grew stern as he stepped across and looked in. But instead of Miss Georgina's gentle face and voice, the more commanding one of Miss Ophelia met him. She stopped the lesson when she saw him, and went to him and spoke. Yes, Georgina was very unwell; the doctor had ordered her to bed. It was very awkward having all her work stopped and everything so upset. "I am trying to do the teaching, but being unused to it, it is very hard."

"Excellent training for you," said her visitor abruptly, hurrying away; and Miss Ophelia stood for a moment wondering what he could mean.

In the cottage Mrs. Luxmore, genial and comfortable, had Miss Smale in charge, and without hesitation or permission she requested Mr. Harden to come up and see the invalid, and with as little hesitation, he went.

Miss Smale colored faintly when she saw her visitor, but a great relief shone in her eyes. "I wanted to see you," she said, eagerly. "If I have been thinking if anything were to happen to me—I am troubled about dear Ophelia."

"She will be all right," he said, gruffly. "She is able to take care of herself, in fact she would be better if she had to." His tone even more than his words shattered at least one of her plans for Ophelia's future. Then he took a chair and seated himself beside her bed, and talked to her for a few moments. She was a child just then in feebleness, and longing to be comforted and taken care of. "It is you who require to be cared for and waited on," he said, as he rose to go. "Now think of yourself and those who want to have you about again, and make up your mind to be well by Christmas Day. We cannot spare you any longer."

And after he had gone Miss Smale lay smiling and happy in spite of her pain, and the load on her mind.

Three or four times each day Mr. Harden climbed the hill to the school to enquire for his mistress. His parishioners shook their heads sagely and smiled. "Poor Miss Smale," they said, sympathetically; "but it must be a great comfort to her to know that Miss Ophelia will have a good home to go to."

Whether his words did her good or not, or whether her recuperative powers were great, no one knows, but for a week before Christmas Miss Georgina was allowed to sit up in her room and on Christmas eve, she went downstairs for the first time. She did not go down until late in the afternoon, though, for she was still weak, and she wanted to sit up to tea that day, for Mr. Harden was to be their guest.

Miss Ophelia was out in the afternoon, but when three o'clock came Miss Georgina could wait no longer. "I will go down alone," she said, in pleased excitement, "and give Ophelia a surprise when she comes home." She crept down slowly, looking tenderly at every familiar object, and she was so happy to be about again. "Dear little room," she said, as she opened the sitting-room door, but it was not the sight of the room alone which called forth her cry of pleasure and surprise. On the warm air which met her came the delicate breath of flowers, in every vase and bowl were beautiful blossoms, dainty fruit on the table by her chair, books and magazines lay about in profusion. With childlike excitement she crept delightedly from one to another.

"He must have done it," she said aloud, with a deep sigh of pleasure. "No one else in the world would think of it. I wonder why he is so good."

"Do you?" said a low, gentle voice behind her. "Do you?"

Miss Georgina turned with a start, a cry, and a swift flush of happiness. On entering the room she had thrown wide the door, and in her excitement had not seen the donor of all the good things, sitting modestly behind it, awaiting her.

Trembling with weakness and the shock she had had, she sank gratefully into the chair he led her to, while he busied himself with her cushions and shawls until she had to some extent recovered herself. When she was calmer, he put his question a third time. "Do you really wonder why I do such trifling acts for you?" he asked, coming round and standing close beside her.

"It is because you are so kind to everyone, of course," she said lamely.

"No, it is not. I am not so disinterested as you are pleased to think. My dear, surely you know that it is because to do anything for you is the greatest pleasure to me, because I have for you the greatest affection and reverence, because I want you to give me the right to do everything for you—to take care of you always."

"No, oh no," she cried in her emotion forgetting her shyness, and looking straight up at the strong, tender face looking down at her anxiously. "It is too much."

"Oh, don't mistake me," he said, smiling, as he laid his hand on her shoulder gently. "I want much in return. I want you and your love."

"And you are not making a mistake? I am so weak," she said, wistfully, and her lip quivered with the pain of renunciation. "I am not worthy."

But he stopped her sharply. "Don't humble me too much," he said, gravely. "If you are not worthy, what am I? I can only ask God to help me share fitly a life so self-denying, so Christ-like, so pure. Oh, I know," he said, as she tried to stop him. "I have seen. Where you are weak I can support, and—oh, my dear, where I am weak you are so strong. You can help and strengthen me much."

She looked up at him with eyes so full of a wonderful surprise. "I can help you?" she said, doubtfully.

"Will you?" he asked, eagerly.

"But Ophelia," she said.

"Ophelia knows," he said, gently. "For once you must think only of yourself—and me, Georgina."

And as she placed her weak little hands in his, the joyful sounds of the Christmas bells floated up from the town below.—The British Weekly.

A Hidden Message.

By Mary Joslyn Smith.

When Tom had nearly completed his course at Yale, his mother, Madame Bond, began to prepare for his coming by fitting up a new room for him in the palatial home. She reasoned that though Tom had had a pleasant room, he was now a young man, and must have a room over the front parlor and have it fitted up handsomely.

The eldest daughter's room had a fine brass bedstead and silk canopy, with all the dainty finery that girls like, but she knew Tom would not like such furnishings. Madame had good taste, and after a little thought decided to have everything in mahogany, and, if possible, get antiquated pieces, having them all redressed before using.

It required several months before she could obtain all she wished. She visited second-hand stores, and had many friends on the lookout for her. Her seamstress brought word of a table or stand with fall leaves beautifully made, with an odd centre for pedestal like a tower. The little table was in possession of a woman who used it in her kitchen, and would gladly take three dollars for it. Madame purchased the stand, and spent six dollars in having it dressed up, but it was a beauty. The cabinet man she employed was interested in helping her find the furniture she wanted, for it gave him profitable work to re-touch it all.

She got a handsome desk whose front let down

and made the top of the writing table, and she found a bedstead and chairs, no two things having been owned by the same person. After the death of an old townsman, she heard that a chest of drawers had been placed in a second-hand shop for sale. It proved to be the very thing she wanted to complete her mahogany furniture for Tom's room.

One day not long after it had been removed to the work-shop, she received word from the repair man that he would like to see her. She went as he asked her to do, and the bureau took on new interest for her. As the workman removed the flat top of the chest of drawers in order to better polish the top, he had found a paper pasted upon the inside, upon which was written the following:

"Made by John Geer, May 10th, 1824, in the town of Davidsburg. Price \$22 money, or \$25 order at stores. Reader, when you read this perhaps I shall be in my grave, and if you have not prepared to meet your God, do so, for you, too, must die. J. Geer."

"This world is a fleeting show,
But the bright world to which we go
Has joys substantial and sincere.
When shall I wake and find me there?"

Madame Bond copied the writing of John Geer, but requested the cabinet man to leave the paper unharmed. She added another paper saying, "John Geer's message has been read April, 1897."

Upon the story being told, it was found that J. Geer was the missing link in the chain for which the descendants were looking, in the mad search for ancestry of these latter days. John Geer had wandered off from the relatives into the new country, and apparently lost himself to the world. For reasons considered sufficient, the family soon after changed the name to Gerhart, or took back the old family name, so it was of great moment to trace John Geer.

The bureau certainly became of still greater interest to Mrs. Bond's large circle of friends, and to Tom's friends; and in spite of the smiles at the quaintness of "John Geer," the highly-polished top of the chest of drawers seems always, without the aid of any X-rays process, to bring out the words:

"If you have not prepared to meet your God, do so, for you, too, must die."—Presbyterianian.

The Power of Forgiveness.

The power of forgiveness even for an offense against human law is well illustrated in the following incident:

A soldier was about to be brought before his commanding officer for some offence. He was an old offender and had often been punished. "Here he is again," said the officer, on his name being mentioned, "flogging, disgrace, solitary confinement, everything has been tried on him." Whereupon the sergeant stepped forward, and, apologizing for the liberty, said: "There is one thing that has never been done with him yet, sir."

"What is that?" said the officer.

"Well, sir," said the sergeant, "he has never been forgiven."

"Forgiven!" exclaimed the colonel, surprised at the suggestion. He reflected a few minutes, ordered the culprit to be brought in, and asked him what he had to say to the charge.

"Nothing, sir," was the reply, "only I am sorry for what I have done."

Turning a kind and pitiful look upon the man, who expected nothing else than that his punishment would be increased with the repetition of the offence, the colonel addressed him, saying, "Well, we have tried everything with you, and now we have resolved to—forgive you."

The soldier was struck dumb with amazement; the tears started in his eyes, and he wept like a child. He was humbled to the dust, and, thanking his officer, he retired—to be the old refractory, incorrigible man? No! from that day forward he was a new man. He who told the story had him for years under his eye, and a better conducted man never wore the Queen's colors.—The Standard.