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Clutterback,

triumphantly, as she lifted the box down, blew the dust from the top, and then took off the cover. “I’ll bet she don’t have anything finer! Oh, Maria, it’s always been the dream of my life to make beautiful presents, and this is the first time I ever could see my way to doing it.”

They carried the box down stairs and put on the kettle to heat some water. “I don’t like to do it, mother,” said Maria. “I’d far rather give her nothing at all.”

“Oh, Maria, you do just wring my heart; you never do see nothing like I do! If you’d seen things like I do you’d have married Jesse Kibb’s grandfather, and been his widow these twenty-five years. You don’t know how bad I felt when he died, and you might have been his widow so easy. But you don’t look at life right, Maria.”

Maria got out a pan, and a cloth, and some soap.

“We’ll have to be awful careful,” she said; “every one of those edges will cut like a knife.”

“I’ll be careful,” said Mrs. Clutterback. “I wish we had printed cards to put with it. It will seem funny to send such a handsome present and have no printed cards.”

Maria washed the broken bits carefully one after the other, and her mother polished them assiduously. Then they found a proper box and white tissue paper and laid in the pieces.

“I declare,” said Mrs. Clutterback, “they shine just like diamonds. It seems almost too handsome to give to someone we’ve never seen—don’t you think?”

Maria ran down town to Mr. Snap’s and came back with the curly-haired wood, and they soon finished packing the vase.

“I know they’ll invite you to the city,” the mother kept on exclaiming as she fluttered around the outskirts of the labor. “Oh, Maria, maybe you’ll like the guard of the train when you go to visit them!”

Maria sighed as she hammered away. She was of a very unromantic nature, her ambitions so far from being positive were altogether negative, and consisted in anticipating a period when she wouldn’t sew, or sing, or keep house, or mind the minister’s children.

The box was sent off the next day, and cost one month’s butter in carriage. It was three weeks before any acknowledgment was received. Then, when the letter did come, Mrs. Clutterback went almost out of her senses.

“My dear Eliza,” (read the epistle),

—“Your gift to Sylvia Katharine was really too lovely. You shouldn’t have done it, Eliza, you shouldn’t have done it. We opened the box together, and Sylvia Katharine’s raptures are beyond the power of pen to describe. It was her handsomest gift, and will ornament the little table that will stand for ever in her front parlor window. The affection which prompted the giving of this costly gift brought tears to my eyes, Eliza. It is thirty-one years since you and I last clasped one another in each other’s arms, and I desire to prove to you that my heart is as tenderly disposed as your own. I am giving up my little domicile now that my birdling has flitted, and am coming, dear Eliza, to pass a few months with you. We shall renew our girlhood memories by your fireside, and if we are as happy as I feel sure that we shall be, I shall divide my time, henceforth, between your home and Sylvia Katharine’s. With inexpressible impatience to see you,
Yours,
Grace Lewis.”

Mrs. Clutterback, as before stated, was driven beside herself by this letter and its unwelcome contents. Maria, very pale, perused it twice in silence.

“You ought to have held me back from making such a handsome present,” her mother moaned; “it was way beyond our means and you knew it, Maria. You’d ought to have restrained me.”

“The idea of her pretending it wasn’t broke—!” said Maria.

“That shows how folks will act deceiving when they want to gain something,” said Mrs. Clutterback. “She wants to visit us, so she pretends that vase ain’t broken.”

“Well, mother,” said Maria, “you wanted me to visit her and so you pretended it wasn’t broken. The pot mustn’t call the kettle black.”

“Maria, you’ll just kill me,” sobbed her mother. “I never dreamed as I should live to hear you call your own mother a pot. And I done it all for you, too.”

“Mother,” said the daughter, suddenly, “I’m just going to write Cousin Grace the truth.”

“That the vase was broken?” gasped Mrs. Clutterback.

“No, that we’re too poor to have her visit us.”

“Oh, Maria!” wailed Mrs. Clutterback, “I never shall see you married if you go on that way!”

But Maria insisted, and wrote the letter. Cousin Grace did not visit them in consequence, but the curious sequel to the affair was that Mr. Snap got hold of a patent glue for mending cut glass and asked for the vase to experiment on. Maria told him the truth, too—“You’ll bring my white hairs to the grave, Maria, the way you go around telling the truth,” her mother protested tearfully—and a sort of confidential friendship sprang up between them, which ended in her promising to marry the china-store man.

“Oh, Maria, to think of me losing you,” cried Mrs. Clutterback. “I know you’re going to live right here in the house, but it never will be the same.” “I don’t know why not,” said Maria.

“Why, Adoniram?” (Mr. Snap)—“will be here, too. But it’s what I’ve been expecting, Maria; it’s the natural end of a girl’s life, and a mother must brace herself to bear it. When your cousin married I knew I wouldn’t be able to keep you long now.”

Maria went on ironing towels.

“Oh, Maria!” exclaimed her mother, “I wonder what Sylvia Katharine will send you for a present!”

Maria stopped ironing suddenly; she really wondered, too.

Sylvia Katharine sent a cut-glass vase with her card (printed) and her mother’s (also printed). It was a handsome vase, but unfortunately it was broken in transit. Sylvia Katharine’s mother wrote the letter which accompanied it.

“My sweetest Maria”—(she wrote)—“We have scoured the town for a companion to the exquisite vase which you and your dear mother sent my darling as a wedding gift, but in the end we had to order one from New York. May it take the same position in your new home that yours has ever held in Sylvia Katharine’s. My dear Maria, you have had a long and tranquil girlhood; may I wish you every joy in the great and solemn step which you are about to take. Sylvia Katharine joins me in all I say. My love to your mother.
“Affectionately your cousin,
“Grace Lewis.”

Maria and her mother were both somewhat taken aback at first. Then: “Maria,” cried Mrs. Clutterback, “Mr. Snap’ll give you some of the glue, and we’ll mend that vase, and I’ll give it to you for my wedding-present.”

Festival of Empire.

One of the most attractive features of the Festival of the Empire, to be held at the Crystal Palace, London, May 24—July 16 (extending over seven weeks), will be the exhibition of paintings, and other works of art by the Overseas artists. Canada, Australasia, and South Africa will have separate galleries, specially decorated by the Festival Council, and for the first time the Briton at home is likely to see a representative collection of works of art by men and women who have made their name in the outposts of the Empire.

The object of the Council is to get

together, not the works of those artists who have studied in Europe, but rather the works of those who have found sufficient inspiration in the atmosphere of their own particular Dominion and State. In a brilliant article, contributed by the Earl of Plymouth, it was pointed out that the Canadian, Australian or South Africa artist who had studied and imbibed the European atmosphere, failed to convey to his canvas any suggestion of his own particular country, preferring, apparently, to compete with the home artist on his own ground.

The pictures which the Council desire for exhibition at the Crystal Palace are not the pictures which a person in London might see any day by walking into one of the great galleries. “Give us,” they say, in effect, “the works of that Canadian or Australasian, or that South African, who ‘feels’ the beauties of his own State, and who has conveyed that feeling to his canvas.”

With the view of collecting a representative exhibition of pictures by Canadian artists, the Council of the Festival of Empire has deputed the Editor of Canada to take sole charge of the Canadian section. Canada will collect the pictures and superintend their display at the Palace. All communications should be addressed to F. W. Gardiner, Canada Newspaper, Aberdeen Chambers, Victoria St., Toronto.

It should be specially noted that this exhibit will offer to all artists throughout the Dominion a unique opportunity of exhibiting (and, if they so desire, of selling) their pictures free of charge in the Capital of the Empire. Under the supervision of Sir Edward Poynter, President of the Royal Academy, their pictures will be exhibited not only to art patrons and art lovers of the Mother Country, but to visitors from the Continent as well as from every quarter of the Empire. All pictures should be sent in for the consideration of the committee as soon as possible, and in every case not later than May 1, and should be addressed to The Manager, The Festival of Empire, Canadian Art-Section, Crystal Palace, London, England.

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