

The Home Mission Journal.

A record of Missionary, Sunday School and Temperance work, and a reporter of church and ministerial activities, and general religious literature. Published semi-monthly.

All communications, whether containing money or otherwise are to be addressed to

REV. J. H. HUGHES,
Cannon Street, St. John, (North) N. B.

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Rosecroft.

CHAPTER XXI.

To Elsie's surprise, Miss Hathaway one evening herself broached the subject about which her niece had been afraid to speak. She was so anxious that Elsie should accept the important position offered her, and spoke so sensibly and cheerily as regards their removal to the school, that our heroine at once yielded. She never quite realized how much this transplanting cost her aunt, but Miss Hathaway had her reward, for she won the hearts of all in the Academy, and her presence there was a continual benediction. And the removal from Rosecroft was made in many ways less painful than they had anticipated. She had dreaded renting their beloved Rosecroft to strangers, and great was their delight when Dr. Noble asked if he might become their tenant. His family of children were scattered and his wife found their own house too large, now their children were gone. Miss Hathaway's joy and thankfulness may be imagined. She could not have wished for more acceptable tenants than these dear old family friends, themselves so fond of Rosecroft.

The spacious auditorium of the Academy is crowded to its utmost limit this bright morning. It is beautifully embellished with foliage and flowers, whose loveliness seems reflected in so many of the girls' faces smiling on every side.

Miss Van Alstyne is not here. The delicate state of her health induced her last fall to follow her doctor's advice and to go abroad for some years. While retaining an interest in the school, she felt that she must resign the position of principal, and at her urgent request and that of the trustees and patrons, our friend Elsie consented to accept the vacant post. She had filled it most gracefully and acceptably for some months now, and this popular school instead of falling off in numbers, has had an increase of pupils under her competent sway. All assistant teachers surround her, and Rosie, promoted two years ago to be house-keeper, and has proved most efficient and directs the servants under her with a firm, yet kindly authority. To our surprise and amusement of her friends, soon after her promotion she married the janitor of the school, a worthy, industrious man, who had filled the post for years.

"We can pull together and work for the good of the school and my own dear folks better married than single," was her somewhat mercantile reason for the match. "And then Jacob's a real decent, sober Christian body, and good-natured into the bargain."

Rosie, or Mrs. Hatch as we must call her now, is full of business this morning preparing, with the aid of her assistants, a collation to be served after the commencement exercises are over. A great number of guests have come from far and near, and if we enter the auditorium again and scan the faces carefully we shall light upon some familiar ones.

There is no mistaking Mrs. Shell-drake. There she sits in one of the front benches, her black mantle, thickly embroidered with passementerie, thrown back from her broad shoulders, her imposing figure robed in dark gray-summer cashmere, as erect and apparently as vigorous as it was when we made her acquaintance fifteen years ago. Only her hair looks changed. There are no sable threads in it now, but the rippling snow white waves are quit becoming to her, and a fine contrast to the keen black eyes. There she sits, pompous, self-complacent, consequent as ever, talking volubly with Mrs. Noble, and is her right-hand neighbor. That gentle, sweet-faced lady has been singing Elsie's praises to her aunt, while Miss Hathaway, seated to the left of Mrs. Shell-drake, can hardly repress a smile of mild amusement. For her sister Minerva not only assents graciously to all this eulogy of Elsie, but assumes airs of immense self-gratulation upon the important part she herself has played in bringing about this satisfactory state of things.

"Yes, Mrs. Noble," she declares, with an emphatic flourish of the gold eye-glasses she has removed for a moment, "I may say without exaggeration that my niece owes her present position largely to me. From conversations with her governess, and my own observation of the girl fifteen years ago, I made up my mind that she would make a successful teacher if properly so I advised Sister Diantha to keep that object steadily in view, and to send the child to some excellent school. With such a large family on my hands I have not been able to visit my sister until now, but I've kept an oversight over Elsie—Elsie, all these years, and have written occasionally to Diantha. She couldn't be expected to understand the girl as well as I, an experienced wife and mother. Besides, Diantha was too genteel, too indulgent to have the entire oversight of Elsie, a fine character but with strong points in it that needed careful training and discipline. Well, my councils have borne fruit, and I am rewarded today for my fifteen years' watchful care over my niece."

"Now, just listen to Minerva!" whispered Mrs. Honeywell, who sat at Miss Hathaway's left hand. Her figure was more pithy than ever, and perhaps because of prolonged high living, she was not nearly so handsome as formerly.

"Just listen to her," she went on, "taking all the credit of Elsie's success, when she prophesied such dreadful things about her, and has never tried to help in any way, except to send you these tiresome proxy letters, full of mistakes and advice! I declare, if poor little Rags were living, I believe she would run on about his being such a noble breed, and how she advised you to take him for a watchdog! I really think she deceives herself, but I wonder if Mrs. Noble is so easily blinded—"

"Hush! Not a word to her, dear Gertrude, I beg of you!" whispers back her gentle sister. "I am only too glad Minerva feels so friendly toward Elsie."

Mrs. Noble, apparently, is not easily blinded, for some resentment mingles with the amused twinkle in her eyes, as she replies to Mrs. Shell-drake:

"An own mother could not have brought Elsie up more lovingly and judiciously than our dear Miss Hathaway, I'm sure. And she has her reward, for Elsie is as devoted as a daughter to her. Just think how lovely, that she is going to take the dear aunt abroad with her this summer. Her physician says it will add ten years or more to her life, and what a world of delight and beauty it will open to them both! Ah, I have never forgotten the three happy months Dr. Noble and I spent in Europe twenty-five years ago! But here comes the dear principle, with the other teachers and the trustees. Doesn't she look like a queen?" as Elsie, tall and stately, came upon the platform, with the rest of the faculty, the trustees, and a number of honored visitors, prominent among them Dr. Noble, Mr. Adams, and the kind friends, to whom she owed her education at Vassar.

"Yes, she is a fine-looking woman," said Mrs. Shell-drake, who had put on her gold eye-glasses again. "That's rather a surprise to me, for though she had a striking face, she was quite plain as a girl."

"Well, you could almost call her handsome now, and her noble character stands out so on her face! Ah, Mrs. Shell-drake, I never know how to leave off when I get to talking about Elsie—hardly and our dear Miss Hathaway. Such a strong Christian in the class hours has been in our church and in the whole community, I may say!"

"Elsie looks really handsome this morning," says Mrs. Honeywell to her sister. "That black grandmère of hers is lovely and so stylishly made. And the white lace vest and that bunch of pink roses light it up beautifully. Ah," she went on with a sigh, "our adopted daughter turned out the best after all. How little Gertrude and Glad's son to care for me, after all I have done for them marrying them off so advantageously, giving them the best of *Bussanax*! But Minerva has had worse luck, though in her case I do think she was a good deal to blame. You see, after Maud married, Sister Shell-drake wanted to run her establishment as well as her own, and Mr. Baker and Maud revolted. They are so rich they can afford to be quite independent of her. But Minerva was very angry and is not on speaking terms with them now, I understand."

While the two sisters discoursed thus, Elsie's eyes rested upon her aunts with a dreamy far-away look. The present had receded from her view, called back in fancy to the past—when she sat in her lonely corner, a shabbily dressed, awkward morbid girl, unloving and unloved, while before her sat her three aunts, deliberating

upon her future.

A dazed, startled feeling came over her suddenly, as if these fifteen blissful years had been indeed a dream, as if the animated scene before her were an illusion. Have we not all such moments.

Miss Hathaway caught the startled look, and feared bitter in an instant were returning to disturb the peace of her niece on this eventful day. She leaned forward a little, giving Elsie her sweetest smile.

The mist wreaths vanished as when the sun shines out, and as Elsie returned the smile, the prayer she breathed so often, rose again in her heart:

"Oh God, I bless thee for my Aunt Diantha's love, the love that changed my life and led me to become thy child! Help me to make her happy, to fill her life with love and sunshine, always!"

THE END.

Irreverence in Worship.

Mr. Campbell Morgan the other day at one of his meetings in Witherspoon Hall rebuked the late comers in words something like these: "I am profoundly impressed by the awful irreverence of many of those who attend religious services in this country. When we are talking to God we do not wish to be disturbed by those who come in late. I would rather have only twenty to meet in a room, in petition than have many coming without the merit of reverence."

We wonder if this eminent preacher is not another of those who point out to us one of our great national faults, if not our greatest national fault. Somehow, for the most part reverence has been left out of the composition of this great, bustling, virile nation of ours. We have in large measure banished it from the home, and the child asserts himself as an equal if not superior terms with his parents. We do not at all consider reverence in respect to official position, and the meanest scullion may hurl his epithets at the provident senator. When we come into the house of the Lord, naturally this atmosphere of irreverence to too large a degree clings to us. Our attitude undoubtedly has its good side and is a protest against autocracy; but it has its bad side, most unquestionably, and this shows itself especially when we come into the house of the Lord. The thought that we are in a holy ground and in the presence of the King of Kings does not, as it ought, influence us. We assume too much to be on a sort of equality with the One whom we worship.

We wonder, however, if the guardians of religious services are not themselves in some measure responsible for this. We have drawn back so emphatically from what has been called the "holy tone," that we are no longer so even or reverent oftentimes in our method of address. The business air is carried into the pulpit and oftentimes a psalm is read or the Lord's Prayer is offered with as little of an atmosphere of reverence about either as might be used in the announcement of the departure of a railroad train. We fancy that here is something for many a leader of religious services to consider worth thinking about. Our recrudescence from the standard form of church architecture may possibly be in some measure responsible. We have gone so far from it that in many instances we worship in what is little better than an opera house with all its surroundings suggestive of anything rather than worship. Something, perhaps much, has been gained by the modern form of our church auditoriums, but much at the same time we are convinced has been lost. No one can go into one of the great cathedrals in the world without being instinctively reverent. The very atmosphere of it, the wonderful suggestiveness of its architecture and all pertaining to it leads one to lift the hat and say this is holy ground. Something of the same atmosphere we are convinced may be retained in the church architecture of the day without the sacrifice of modern convenience and very greatly to the gain of what is so essential in worship, reverence.

SURE ENOUGH—A little boy of Springfield, Tenn., with a small boy's talent for presenting hard problems, said to his mother: "If they vote whiskey out of Springfield, what will they do for men to put in jail."