

only sounds from without were the bubbling of the kettle and Lightning's restless stepping. Within the little girls played drowsily with their dolls on the bed, drowsy with heat and subdued by the silent, solemn loneliness.

Suddenly Mrs. Schloss started up and dropped the baby into Patty's lap.

'My, those beans are burning! Don't you smell them?' she exclaimed. She seized the pail and dipper and hurried out to the cistern for water. In a moment she came flying back empty-handed, her face quite white and wild.

'Oh, there's such a terrible storm coming!' she gasped, and even as she spoke the sunshine paled at the open door as if a shadow had passed over it. Patty sprang from the chair and ran with the baby in her arms to the corner of the house where she could get a look at the southern sky. It was dark with a great mess of working, puffing, slate-colored cloud, whose trailing violet edges here and there showed their lining in spurts of dirty white. From its very centre dipped a greenish funnel-shape, which was licking the earth like a huge thirsty tongue as it came. The distant noises of the storm came to Patty as she stood, and presently one nearer at hand, a low tense singing sound, which swept the prairie right and left as if a thousand rattlesnakes had stirred angrily in the grass. She felt the northern woman's trembling clutch on her arm.

'It's coming right this way,' she moaned. 'Oh, what shall we do? Where shall we go?'

Patty put the baby in her arms.

'Yo' see that air cyclone-cellar?' she drawled. 'Wa'al, I reckon we'll git into it ez fast ez we know how. This sort o' thing's what it was made fo'. Yo' take the baby an' I'll look arter the little gals.' She gave the almost paralyzed woman a shove forward. 'Yo'll hev to git a right smart move awn yo', she said. She ran to Lightning, who had begun to show signs of great uneasiness, jerked up the bodark peg and turned him in the direction of the ranch, which she saw lay out of the track of the cyclone.

'Home with yo'!' she cried, sharply, and struck him a stinging blow on the flank with the peg end of the cord. Then she flew into the sod-house, dragged forth the children and hustled them into the storm-cellar, where their mother crouched waiting and trying to hush the frightened baby. Patty had no more than made the trap-door fast when, with a grinding, crushing roar, as if the whole prairie was being broken into bits, the storm was upon them.

It was all over in a moment, and they huddled there in the moist, hut darkness, listening to the rattle of sleet and the slash of rain above them. Trickling streams found their way through the earth and ran in upon them, wetting their clothes and making their imprisonment just that much more disagreeable. As soon as Patty dared she lifted the trap-door and peered out. The temperature had fallen and the keen, fresh air met her damp face agreeably. Where the house had been was a heap of tumbled sod with a blue china plate sticking out of the top. But in the distance an outfit, with a wildly excited man driving it, was making the best of its way over the prairie.

Patty crawled out into the rain and signaled to him.

'Yo're man's comin'!' she informed Mrs. Schloss.

A few minutes later they all stood together looking at the ruin the cyclone had made.

'We'd all been killed if it hadn't been for you,' the little woman said to Patty. 'I was that scared I'd never thought of the storm-cellar. Oh, I am sure the Lord sent you to take care of us to-day,' and she raised one of Patty's brown hands to her mouth and kissed it.

'Well, I guess we haf to give up,' Schloss said, shaking his head sadly. 'I guess we haf no more business down here.' He pulled a soiled envelope from his pocket and gave it to his wife. 'Your Sister Lize she haf send us money to go back and we go. That settles it. You've been a good, brave, little frau, Mariechen, and I half make one big fool mit mineself. I do so no more, hein.' He turned over a clod of earth with his foot and stooping picked up the baby's rattle-box. His face brightened as he pressed it into the warm little hand. He turned to Patty.

'I got mine wif and children left. Thank Gott! I take them back with me and something more — I haf had a thousand dollars' worth of what you call 'em—experience, jah?'

And Patty laughing thought he had.

The Duty that Lieth Nearest.

Do thy duty that lieth nearest thy hand,
And seek not thy mission o'er all the wide land;

Thy field lies before thee, around thee,
and thine

Is the hand that should open that field's
precious mine.

Whether country or city, green fields or
grand hall

Shall claim thee, that claim is thy mis-
sion's loud call.

O, that I could tell thee, in words that
would burn,

Of chances now lost that will never return!
And lost while thou'rt searching, with sad,
anxious mind,

In some distant vineyard thy lifework to
find.

Do the duty that lieth the nearest thy
hand:

'Tis the faithful in little that much shall
command.

Where now thou'rt abiding, seek work for
the Lord,

While thy heart and thy hands move in
cheerful accord;

Give the kind word that's needed, the
smile that will cheer,

And a hand to relieve the tired laborer,
near.

In the mart, in the field, in the dearer
home band,

Do the duty that lieth the nearest thy
hand.

—'Waif.'

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What One Boy Did.

(Susan Brown Robbins, in 'Good Cheer.')

Miss Dexter was almost ready to give up beaten. When she took the school the committee told her that the former teacher had been unable to stand the strain and had broken down with nervous prostration. It was really a place for a man, they said, and if she failed, they would not try any more women teachers.

Miss Dexter had not had much experience with refractory scholars before, but she began her work confidently. With kindness and firmness, she reasoned, she could soon get the school under better discipline.

But three weeks went by, and she could not see the least improvement. Every morning she faced the roomful of boys with courage and determination, and every night when she was alone she would lay her head down on her desk and cry with utter weariness and discouragement.

One night Joe Prentiss forgot to take his books with him, and did not remember them till he was half-way home. So he turned around and hurried back, wondering if he could get there before Miss Dexter went away.

He tried the door of the room and found it unlocked. He opened it and went in, then stopped short in amazement. Miss Dexter was crying like any school-girl, with her head on her desk. Now and then her shoulders shook, and he could hear her stifled sobs.

A scared look came into his face. 'What is the matter?' he asked, but there was no answer. He went nearer and touched her shoulder. 'What is the matter, Miss Dexter?' he asked again, and his voice was full of concern. He never knew what to do when he saw a woman crying.

She started violently and raised her head to give him a frightened glance, then she buried her face from sight again. Joe stood there waiting. Gradually her sobs ceased and she wiped her eyes and sat up, smiling a little tremulously.

'I—I feel better now,' she said. 'I'm sorry you caught me crying.'

'But what is the matter, Miss Dexter?' Joe repeated, still looking anxious, and a little curious, too.

Miss Dexter was silent for a moment, searching his face. 'I believe I'll tell you,' she said. 'Perhaps you will help me.'

'I'll do anything I can,' he answered.

'It is the way the boys act,' she began. 'Everyone told me I could not manage them, but I was determined to do it if possible. I have tried so hard, but it doesn't do a bit of good. Every night I am ready to give up, but in the morning I have better courage and try one more day. This is the worst-behaved room in the building, and if there isn't some improvement soon I shall have to resign. The committee won't stand it much longer. That will hurt my chances for another place, and oh, I do need the money so!' and her eyes filled with tears.

Joe ran his fingers through his hair in perplexity.

'I'm sorry, Miss Dexter,' he said. 'I suppose I'm one of the worst ones, but I didn't think.'

Miss Dexter smiled. 'No, Joe,' she said, 'you are not the worst one, but you are bad enough, and I don't suppose any of the boys think.'