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Trifles (?)

BY ROBERT ELLIOTT.

A lily from a clod looks up
To heaven, and heaven fills her cup;
A daisy dies, yet dying earns
A glance of love from Robert Burns;
A star has shone above the sea
Till past the rock the boat went free;
A ray of light has pierc'd a pine
And cheer'd a drooping columbine;
A word of comfort like a seed
Has grown a harvest great, indeed.

Matter-o'-Money.

BY MISS KATE RICHMOND.

IF it's bad to have money, it's worse to have none," Kitty Allen chanted, as she turned to toss an armful of white work to the table behind her. She was sitting at her sewing machine, where she had been all day except just the little while she had spent over her lunch. The lunch was dinner as well, since, being a house full of women, cold meat and berries and bread and butter took the place of the ceremonious meal that a man in the house would have made necessary.

Leah made no answer. Leah was putting in gussets and making buttonholes in the shirts that her sister stitched. It was close work, and kept her silent, but then Leah was always quiet.

Kitty tossed her round arms above her head, yawning with a little impatient emphasis.

"I hate poverty—don't you, Leah?"

"Yes, dear—sometimes."

Kitty stopped with upraised arms to stare at her sister. The even stitches were going in just as rapidly and surely, the low swings of the low rocking-chair vibrated as steadily, but Kitty felt that her own vehemence meant no more than the few placid, low-toned words.

"We are dreadfully poor," taking up her work again with a sigh.

And Leah said, "Yes, dear," again, and finished a button-hole without raising her eyes.

They were pretty girls, both of them, but Leah at twenty-four was so grave and sober that to childish nineteen-years-old Kitty she seemed a generation away. Sweet and prim and dainty, she sat in her cool lawn and sewed as if it were an afternoon amusement instead of a struggle for bread and butter.

Kitty's silky, curling hair was twisted up anyhow on the top of her head. She had on an old white sack, and her small feet were thrust into a pair of burst and broken slippers. Kitty could never work except in a condition of disarray, and to-day there had been a special pressure.

There came a ring at the door.

"There!" in dismay. "You'll have to go, Leah, and whoever it is, say I'm out—I'm going out, to pick the straw-berries."

Leah was quite used to being left to cover a retreat. She went quietly and opened the door for Richard Mason.

"Isn't Kitty at home?" They had always been school-mates. "I specially wanted to see her."

"She is out—I mean—she is in the garden."

"Hanging out clothes'?"

"As bad as that—picking berries. She won't want to see you, Dick. She has been hard at work all day."

"I understand; but I want to see her. There's to be a picnic at High Rock day after to-morrow, and you are both going."

"Are we?" smiling faintly. She turned and led the way to the sitting room. Standing there in his handsome young manhood his presence seemed to fill the whole room. Leah looked up at him with admiring eyes.

"What is it?" with a laugh in his own.

"I was thinking—you've grown good-looking since you were a schoolboy."

"Thank you," not disclaiming the fact. "Now I'm going to find Kitty."

"At your own peril;" but he took the risk readily enough and found his way out through the house like one quite accustomed to it.

Leah took up her buttonholes with a weary little sigh.

"It's worse to have none." The nursery jingle rang in her head. Just now Mason's coming made matters worse. He seemed so strong and buoyant, so able to control life. He was poor, too, but he had strength and brains and a man's chance to use them. If his feet were on the lower rungs of the ladder now, there was nothing to hinder his mounting to the leisure and luxury above.

"Six years," she thought, bitterly. "I get furious sometimes. No time for anything but work. And Kitty's years going just as mine have gone."

The elm shadows were lengthening across the grassy yard. Little breaths of coolness came in at the open windows; a white moon began to show itself palely in the afternoon sky. She folded the last garments of the dozen, gathered up the scattered threads in a methodical manner, and went out to lay the table for tea.

It was not an elaborate meal. There was bread and butter and plain light cake, and a heaping glass dish of berries. When all was ready she looked at the table doubtfully.

"Dick will stay to tea," she thought; and turned toward the cellar with a thought of resources there.

"If I do, we shall go without at our lunch to-morrow," setting her lips. It was a trifle, but just now Leah Allen had come to a place where there are no trifles.

Mason was in the garden still. She could hear his voice and the treble of Kitty's laughter. They came in together, and Mrs. Allen followed them. Leah was like her mother in looks and manners; the same soft dark hair, and fathomless, untroubled eyes. It was easy to guess what the younger woman would be with twenty more years over her head.