

"She'll do!" exclaimed Harold, tossing his cap into a corner.

"Oh, she's just as pretty, mamma!" added Mary eagerly.

"And we're not to call her 'Miss Ainsley' at all," put in Jack. "She wants us to say 'Teacher Ruth.'"

"Then she must be a Quakeress," observed their mother. "I am very glad you like her. It is a long time since they had a new teacher at Holly School."

That afternoon as Mrs. Marston was potting some of her garden plants she heard the front gate click, and looked up to meet the soft, gray eyes of a stranger.

"This is Miss Ainsley, I know," exclaimed the good lady, dropping her trowel and garden gloves and stepping toward her visitor with cordial, outstretched hand. "I am very glad to meet you. You see the children have told me all about 'Teacher Ruth.'"

A flush of pleasure swept over the girl's face, and she returned Mrs. Marston's hand-clasp with a grateful pressure.

"These make it very easy for me to state my errand," she began. "I felt a little timid about coming, but I heard Mary say something to one of the other scholars which led me to think thee had at times taken some of the teachers to board, and—I wondered if—if thee would take me."

Teacher Ruth looked up with such child-like questioning in her soft eyes that Mrs. Marston's motherly heart opened to her at once. She was a young woman herself, but she had been mothering things all her life, and her three irrepressible children did not so completely absorb her energies as to shut out interest in all weak or lonely things—and Teacher Ruth did look lonely.

"You poor child!" exclaimed the elder woman, putting a strong arm about the girl and drawing her toward the house. "you have been homesick, haven't you?"

"Yes," admitted the little teacher. "I—I think I have. It is not pleasant where I am stopping. I must make some change."

"If you don't mind a small room, I think I can take you," said Mrs. Marston, pushing a piazza chair toward her guest. "I have had some of the teachers here at different times—I am very glad to. You know, perhaps, that I have to depend somewhat upon my own exertions for our support. My husband died when Jack was a baby."

Teacher Ruth glanced up with mute sympathy in her eyes.

"Thee is good to let me come," she said gently; and then she followed her new friend up the low, broad stairway to look at the cosy little room destined to be hers. Before the clock in the hall had struck again it was satisfactorily arranged that Teacher Ruth should make her home at the Marstons'.

It was a very happy thing for all concerned. The young woman, with her gentle and cheerful ways, quickly found her place in the home. The children delighted in her companionship, and their mother found the evenings less long, less filled with memories endangering her fortitude, when the little teacher brought her books down into the sitting room, as she did very often when once she had assured herself of being welcome there. As the days grew shorter and the fire on the broad hearth crackled cheerily, the books were often laid aside, and the two women would fall a-talking as women will, be they young or old, especially in the presence of a wood fire.

There was only one thing about

Teacher Ruth that troubled Mrs. Marston. Full of life and energy herself, a brilliant, active woman, she had always lived intensely, and whenever she remembered the youth of her companion it was with a sense of wonder that any girl of twenty-three should be so calmly, cheerfully content with the humdrum existence of a teacher in a country village.

"It really exasperates me sometimes," Mrs. Marston admitted to herself; "it isn't natural for a young thing to be so—so calmly satisfied and peaceful. I wish I could stir her up a bit. The stirring must come sooner or later, and the longer it is put off the more painful it will be."

"Have you met any of the young people here?" she asked that evening, as Teacher Ruth at last laid aside a great pile of examination papers and turned with a little smile of satisfaction toward the glowing logs in the fire-place.

She shook her head at Mrs. Marston's question. "Nay, friend, I have no time," she replied.

"But you ought to make time,"

persisted the elder woman. "It is not right for you to be so absorbed in your work. You will grow old before your day, Ruth."

"I love my work," said the girl, quietly. "I have no wish for anything more just now. I have had my playtime, you know."

Mrs. Marston tossed aside her magazine with an impatient exclamation.

"The pity of it! To hear a child like you talking of having had her playtime. My dear, I don't believe you know what it means. Have you ever been to a dance?"

Teacher Ruth laughed. "We are

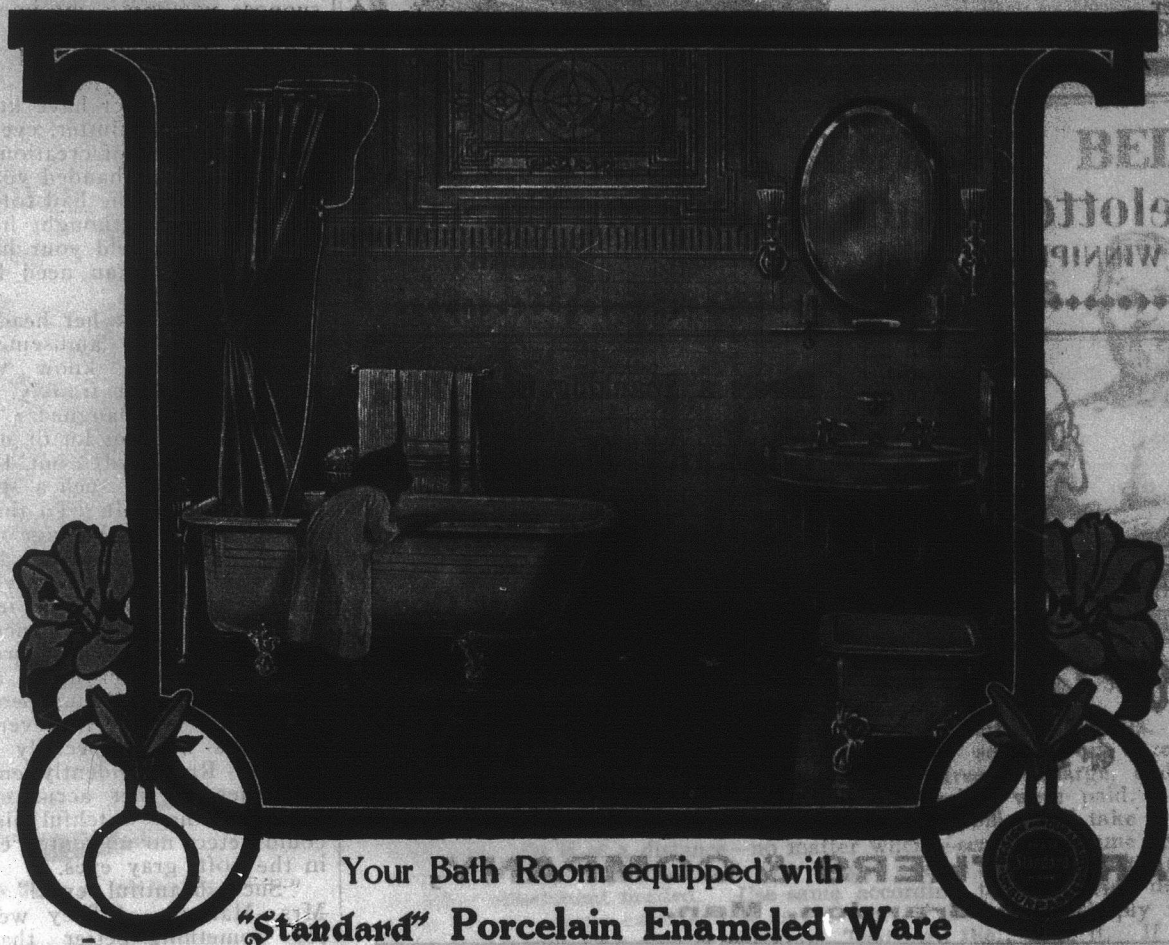
not given much to dancing in Mayville, as thee knows. We used to dance at college, though."

"I don't mean dancing with girls!" murmured Mrs. Marston contemptuously. "I mean beautiful ball gowns and dreamy orchestras hidden behind palm and evergreens; I mean the scent of flowers and the flutter of fans; the murmur of happy young voices in cool, green corners and all that. My! It makes my pulse beat more quickly to think of it now, Ruth," and she leaned forward to look into the girl's eyes. "Tell me, Ruth, did you ever have a thrill?"

A little laugh rippled from the soft



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