

"I haven't any chance to be lazy," she said. "Johnny and I are all alone in the world. I wish you could have seen how we used to live, Lou. Not that it was at all splendid, but we had a little house all our own, with grape-vines and fruit-trees that father planted before he died. We had hard work to get along, to be sure, just mother and I and Johnny; but then it was home there.

"Mother always wanted Johnny to be a minister, and he wanted to be one, too; and you should have seen how he studied, and how he worked between times, in order to get an education, and keep mother and me comfortable, too. We had an uncle that wanted to help us, only he wouldn't as long as Johnny meant to be a preacher, for he hated preachers. And we couldn't give that up, you know—we'd rather die first. So Johnny worked and studied himself sick. It was a long, fearful fever, Lou, and he isn't over it yet. It was his delicate brain the fever hurt most—our poor, beautiful Johnny. Then mother died, and I had to give up the house and garden, and the dear old blossomy front-yard, and all, and Johnny was sent to an asylum. He was there a long time, and at last they sent him to me cured, they said; but it's as you see, and I mean to keep him with me now. He's more like himself with me than anywhere else, and I'm a great deal happier taking care of him. I'm a real good nurse, and, don't you see, I keep his little room in there just as fresh and bright as they do at the asylum? We go to the woods and gather flowers and leaves to make wreaths to hang up in there till it's perfectly beautiful, and Johnny enjoys it so when it's all done! I can see that he's getting better every day; and, O, I am so glad! Such a very deep, perfect gladness it is that I don't feel a bit like clapping my hands and singing over it."

Somehow, being with the earnest, heart-whole little vest-maker, was like being out in a clear, fresh, bracing air. She didn't parade the sorrow of her life before you, and yet she must have known much of it, and borne it bravely. Lou never had many friends. She was too shy and awkward with most people for them to like her; so it was not strange that the new things that came to her now had never been suggested before.

"Why, Ruth," she said, looking at her friend almost reverently, "I've all my life been in a mistake. I've wanted to be great not for the sake of greatness, but just for the homage it brings. You're great without

knowing it. I do believe, after all, it's only in being good."

Her friend opened wide her clear, sunnyclear eyes when Lou said that.

"Only to be good!" she said, seriously. "I think it's hard to be good—the hardest thing in the world."

Yes, that was true. Lou gloomily confessed it to herself. It meant a whole life of bitter struggling and earnest, loving, unselfish work. But she said,

"Well, Ruth, tell me what to do next."

Ruth laughed a pleasant little laugh.

"Why, Lou," she said, "if I were you, I'd just go home and tell my mother all about it, just as you've told me; and then I'd go to work and help her wash dishes, and cook, and bake, and do all the homely housework, even if I didn't like it. That'll give you a relish for your books when you have a minute to spare to them; and I wouldn't think about *being* anything but a good, true woman. What if there is something fine and bright in you? That's no sign you're to be anybody celebrated and looked up to all over the world. It's just a blessing given to Lou Parker for her to make the most of, whether anybody ever knows it or not."

She hadn't meant to preach Lou such a sermon, but she did it, cheerfully and honestly.

Ought I to tell how Lou's loving mother forgave her when Lou told her of her disgrace and her new resolves? Has any lazy, dreamy little castle-builder seen the wrong in Lou's life? or have I told it vaguely, as Lou thought her thoughts?

#### ENIGMA.

My birthplace is the teeming earth,

My dwelling place the sky—

'Tis to the sun I owe my birth,

On earth's fair couch I lie.

The only thing not ranked within

The grand six days' creation,

Although 'tis true there then was seen

A very near relation.

Seldom welcome when I come,

Yet wished for when away,

Always grumbled at by some,

And never asked to stay.

But if an unwelcome guest

To me 'tis little matter,

I always come with wondrous zest

To gala and regatta.