

* * * The Story Page. * * *

Ruth's Discarded Scheme.

(BY ELIA BRECHER GITTINGS)

"Could you analyze all those sentences from Paradise Lost?"

"No, indeed, not the half of them. Did you master them? They're tougher than pine knots."

"No, I confess some of the constructions mastered me. I sat up as long as mother would allow me, and dreamed of them all night. I suppose I shall have to respond with 'not prepared' when my name is called to-day, and I hate that of all things."

It was the new scholar who spoke. She was an earnest student, as well as a most attractive girl, and Ruth Hastings had grown quite attached to her in a few weeks of their acquaintance. Ruth gave her friend's arm an affectionate little squeeze as she answered lightly:

"O, I shall not do that, nor will you have to either. Ralph and I have it all planned. We shall just start Prof. Morris on an argument in the very first sentence and no one will be called upon after that."

"I do not quite understand you."

"O, it's a scheme we often work on the professor when we haven't our lessons well prepared. You have been here so short a time that you have not caught it yet I presume. You must have noticed, however, that our teacher is exceedingly fond of argument?"

"Yes, I have thought it was almost a weakness of his—though I do not like to be critical."

"Such a decided weakness, that we have learned to turn it to good account to escape bad marks. When not well prepared we just spring some knotty questions upon him—if possible some point about which grammarians differ—and then when he undertakes to explain it some of the smart ones like Ralph will disagree with him and the work is done. He not only will not yield a point himself, but is never satisfied until he has made you yield yours; so he talks on and on reviewing the history of language from Sanscrit, if necessary to his point and first thing he knows, the recitation hour is past, the bell rings, he jerks out his watch, examines it with a wild sort of stare, flushes nervously and says: 'We will review to-day's lesson on the morrow.' We go home chuckling at having gained an extra study period on a difficult lesson."

The expression on the new scholar's face which had at first been simply one of curiosity, became suddenly grave and she offered no reply. Ruth looked at her inquiringly.

"Isn't it a scheme?" she asked.

"Yes—it certainly is a scheme—but is it exactly—" her face flushed and she seemed unwilling to go on.

"Exactly what?"

"Why, is it really honest?"

"Honest!" exclaimed Ruth, almost stopping upon the sidewalk in her astonishment. "Why, what possible dishonesty can there be in a pupil's asking questions of his teachers? They are employed to give us information, are they not?"

"Certainly; but I understood you to say that you did not ask for the sake of information, but simply to evade a recitation."

"O, yes, of course, if you wish to strain a point; but all the class do it, at least you are the only one I've heard object to it. They all seem to enjoy the sport, and really I cannot see what harm it does the professor."

"I was not thinking of the harm to him—although you own that he is annoyed when made conscious of the lapse of time—I was thinking of the harm to you, or whoever is party to the act."

"And what is that, pray?"

Mary Bennett hesitated. She had not meant to preach, and she did not enjoy criticising her friends, especially a whole class of them, and such new ones, too.

"Come out with it! I promise not to be offended. I shall like you all the better if you do not always agree with me."

"Well, then, if you will pardon my saying so, it seems to me that acting from any other than perfectly sincere motives must always be in a degree damaging to character, a weakening of the mainspring of Christian purpose."

They were at the recitation hall now and companions were joining them. Mary lowered her voice as she added:

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,"

Ruth pressed her hand cordially.

"Thank you," she said, "I never looked at it in that light before. I'm so apt to see just the fun in things."

In the vestibule they met Ruth's cousin Ralph. Ruth drew him to one side and whispered hurriedly.

"Don't work the scheme on Prof. Morris today. I'll tell you about it later. You have your lesson anyway."

"All right, coz, just as you say."

When Ruth's name was called she answered bravely, "Not well prepared today," but although her face flushed there was a warm glow of approving conscience within.—*W.*

Plans and Plans.

A Story.

"We're ready for Sunday or Monday," and the Rev. Josiah Currie got up from his desk with a sigh of relief lifting what seemed an overgrown canister just as a lady appeared in the doorway. It was his wife's sister and on seeing the minister's burden, exclaimed:

"How funny! It looks as though it might be the very yacht Hamlet's two friends sailed away for England in," and they all joined in the laugh.

Mrs Currie had been packing-up for her husband, who was off to fill an appointment next day.

He picked up a bundle, "What's this? O! yes, my Sunday grey felt hat, how thoughtful of you!"

"Josiah" said his wife, "you remember that Mr. Sydney, how he seems always to be brooding over that question as to why a teacher should be dismissed no reason being assigned. It seems to think the principal must have been insane. I saw him the other day with quite a crowd around him and he was setting the principal off in the most ridiculous light, and someone whispered to her next neighbour, only for one thing he would certainly have been a second Mark Twain, and they all appeared very much amused. It made me think of something we were reading the other night."

"Oh! yes, I remember" said her husband. "Not all that forced politeness which defends Fools in their faults could gag his grinning friends." But we are forgetting all about your work, you know we want to have a good collection."

"Yes," Miss West joined in, "I was speaking to one of our church members on that very subject and she brought up an idea that she appeared to think no one knew anything about but herself, that the Bible sometimes implies the restoring a sum intrusted, and lost percentage besides, as well as the giving of tythes."

"Yes" said Mrs Currie they always wander off on a side issue. Then you know what is expected at the close."

"Yes," he said, "a vote of thanks murmur gentle lyre," and they all laughed.

"No laughing matter," he said, putting on a solemn look all of a sudden. "A minister has to praise if he wants to be praised—then he hardly knows what he's doing people tell him he is so popular. All very well down nearer the ground. Up higher all seems confusion of sound, 'hodman' keep handing up brick for mortar and mortar for straw."

Oh! I'm so sorry if you feel that way. I never heard you talk so before."

"No," he rejoined, "but for all the jangling, I can't help thinking right is right and wrong is wrong whether the price be in one or thirty pieces."

Mrs Currie added, "or Rags," for that matter. Then reassuringly, "I hope you will have a good time."

"Oh! yes," about the two little boys who have just come from school, "papa will have the very bestest time and he's the very bestest preacher, too," and they gleefully clap their father from the room.

It is pleasant to be appreciated, and Mr. Currie commences to feel quite light-hearted as he hurries to catch the train for a distant city to attend the convention.—*Com.*

A Little Traveler.

A pale little lad in a west-bound train glanced wistfully toward a seat where a mother and her merry children were eating lunch. The tears gathered in his eyes, though he tried to keep them back. A passenger came and stood beside him.

"What's the trouble?" he asked. "Have you no lunch?"

"Yes, I have a little left, and I'm not so awful hungry."

"What is it, then? Tell me; perhaps I can help you."

"It's—it's so lonely, and there's such a lot of them over there, and—and they've got their mother."

The young man glanced at the black band on the boy's hat. "Ah," he said gently, "and you have lost yours."

"Yes, and I'm going to my uncle; but I've never seen him. A kind lady, the doctor's wife, who put up my lunch, hung this card to my neck. She told me to show it to the ladies on the car and they would be so kind to me; but I didn't show it to anyone yet. You may read it if you like."

The young man raised the card and read the name and address of the boy. Below were the words:

"And whosoever shall give drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

The reader brushed his hand across his eyes and was silent for a moment. Then, "I'll come back very soon," he said, and made his way to the mother and her children.

And presently little George felt a pair of loving arms

about him, and a woman's voice, half sobbing, calling him a poor, dear little fellow, begged him to come with her to her children. And for the rest of that journey, at least, motherless Georgie had no lack of mothering.—*Sel.*

Good Humor in the Family.

Good humor is rightly reckoned a most valuable aid to a happy home life. An equally good, and useful faculty is a sense of humor or the capacity to have a little fun along with the humdrum cares and works of life. We all know how it brightens up things generally to have a lively, witty companion who sees the ridiculous points of things and can turn an annoyance into an occasion for laughter. It does a great deal better to laugh over some domestic mishap than to cry or scold over it. Many homes and lives are dull because they are allowed to become too deeply impressed with a sense of the cares and responsibilities of life to recognize its bright and especially its mirthful side. Into such a household, good but dull, the advent of a witty, humorous friend is like sunshine on a cloudy day.

While it is always oppressive to hear persons constantly striving to say witty or funny things, it is worth while, seeing what a brightener a little fun is, to make an effort to have some at home. It is well to turn-off an impatient question sometimes, and to regard it from a humorous point of view, instead of being irritated about it. "Wife what is the reason I never can find a clean shirt?" exclaimed a good but rather impatient husband, after rummaging all through the wrong drawer. His wife looked at him steadily for a moment, half inclined to be provoked; then with a comical look she said: "I never guess conundrums; I give it up." Then he laughed, and they both laughed, and she went and got his shirt, and he felt ashamed of himself and kissed her; and then she felt happy, and so what might have been an occasion for hard words and unkind feelings became just the contrary, all through the little vein of humor that cropped out to the surface.

Some people have a peculiar faculty for giving a humorous turn to things when they are reproof. It does just as well oftentimes to laugh things off as to scold them off. Laughter is better than tears. Let us have a little more of it at home.—*Religious Herald.*

A Novel Text.

An old minister named Walter Mills was going to church one Sunday morning, and passing an old lady on the street he spoke to her and asked her to attend church. The old lady asked him what denomination he belonged to and he told her. She said she had no love for that denomination, and would not go to hear their minister preach.

Mr. Mills on hearing this said, "I am the minister." This nearly took the breath from the old lady, but she quickly got over her surprise and said, "Are you, and what might your text be this morning?"

Mr. Mills answered, "Beef and greens," and started off towards the church.

The old lady looked after him and muttered, "'Beef and greens;' what does he mean? I must go and hear him," and off she started.

When the minister got into the pulpit he saw the old lady in the front pew. After the opening services were over, he proceeded to preach, taking his text from Proverbs: "Better a dinner of herbs and contentment therewith, than a stalled ox with sorrow."

The instant the old lady heard it she exclaimed, "Yes, it's 'beef and greens' after all," to the surprise of the congregation.

Mr. Mills then took up her words and said, "Yes, brethren, its beef and greens;" and he preached an eloquent sermon.—*Sel.*

Talk to The Children.

Children hunger perpetually for new ideas. They will learn with pleasure from the lips of parents what they deem drudgery to study in books, and even if they have the misfortune to be deprived of many educational advantages, they will grow up intelligent if they enjoy in childhood the privilege of daily listening to the conversation of intelligent people. We sometimes see parents who are the life of every company which they enter, dull, silent and uninteresting at home among their children. If they have not mental activity and mental stores sufficient for both, let them first use what they have for their own households. A silent home is a dull place for young people, a place from which they will escape if they can. How much useful information, on the other hand, is often given in pleasant conversation, and what unconscious, but excellent, mental training in lively, social argument. Cultivate to the utmost the art of conversation at home.

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