

who had been so patient with her mistake. Hortensia had forgotten the matter completely by the time that another trial presented itself.

She stood at a table in the kitchen, pressing the linings of a waist which she was making over. She detested flatirons, and Bridget was objecting, silently but vigorously, to her presence in the kitchen. It was not an opportune occasion for thirteen-year-old Alice to dash in hurriedly, arrayed in Hortensia's prettiest French flannel waist.

'You'll not mind, will you, sister, just this one morning? I tore the sleeve of mine last night, and there isn't time to mend it, and yours just fits me.'

Hortensia never remembered exactly what she said. The saintly Miss Gresham of the academy would not have recognized it as being in her mother tongue. It made Bridget, who shared in the family reverence for Hortensia, retreat into the pantry with wide eyes of amazement.

'Sure, an' I never thought the likes of that was inside of her! Now, then, if she was a man an' that mad, it's big swear words I'd be hearing.'

'Go upstairs and put on your own waist at once,' Hortensia concluded. 'And never dare to go into my room again without permission.'

'But, sister, I'll be late—and I haven't been late this term—and I'll miss the prize'—protested the culprit, aghast.

'Do as I tell you!' said Hortensia. In ten minutes she heard the front door bang behind a deeply indignant Alice, and a feeling of compunction stole over her. It was true that the child had done wrong, but her own course did not seem entirely justifiable. Her cheeks burned over the memory of words and tones which Bridget had overheard.

Passing through the front hall shortly after, with the neatly-pressed linings over her arm, she found a letter for herself on the table. It bore the well-known postmark of the academy town, and she sighed as she took it into the sitting room. If she could only return to those appropriate surroundings, where her authority was never questioned, and where her temper was never assailed by open impertinence or clumsy attempts at helpfulness!

The letter contained a delicate web of lace, and was signed by the girls of the senior class. Hortensia had loved them dearly. Their little remembrance of her birthday touched and pleased her, while she smiled over the flowery phrases of their letter, knowing so well the girlish ardor that lay beneath them. But gradually, as she read, one sentence after another detached itself from the rest, piercing her consciousness with sharp, unmeant reproach:—

'You have made simple womanly goodness beautiful to us.'

'You made us feel that even little, trivial things are the fair stones that build up happiness and character.'

'We realize how much of added beauty there is in the faithfulness which took you away from the work you loved, to lend your patient helpfulness to the need of your own home. It will make us better women.'

Hortensia's face dropped against the sofa pillow, while hot tears fell on the meshes of the lace handkerchief! Patience and helpfulness, indeed! The little trivial

things that build happiness and character! What if the record of this one morning were read out before the court which had given that verdict?

The next half hour was undoubtedly wholesome for Hortensia, but it was far from pleasant. She saw with painful vividness the long self-deception of her life. Which was the true Miss Gresham?—the woman whom the academy girls worshipped as a saint, or the sister who was failing so wretchedly in the use of the greatest opportunity?

'I should have recognized it, if it had only been a chance to give my life for them, or to nurse them through small-pox!' she told herself, bitterly. 'But just the everyday little things! the helping them by letting them try to help me—poor dears! That I should break down in the simplest little courtesies and kindnesses!'

At last she roused herself.

'The opportunity isn't all past yet,' she said. 'Not even this one wretched birthday.'

She went to the telephone and called up Fred at the office where he worked.

'I have decided that I want to go with you to-night, after all,' she told him. 'I had forgotten that this was my birthday, and I want to celebrate it. Will you take me?'

The answer that came back sent the warm color tingling over her cheeks and brow, till she glanced at herself in a mirror as she passed.

'Hortensia Gresham, what a "fright" you are!' she said. 'More light on the little things that make life beautiful!'

Perfect neatness, of course—Hortensia could not have been untidy. But the hair was strained back tightly from the forehead, and the morning wrapper, detested by all the children, was absolutely unrelieved in its sombre ugliness.

'We'll see about this,' she told herself, grimly, remembering that at the academy she had never thought it a waste of time to make herself and her room as dainty as possible. She threw open the shutters which made the sitting room dismal, and raised the cover of the piano, with another wholesome memory of Alice's feeble protests when she had begun to keep the instrument closed.

'She said I made the room look like a sepulchre. And she almost cried when I took that rug and the etchings up to my room. They are coming back here before she is home from school.'

When Alice did return, she paused at the door of the sitting room with a little cry of pleasure.

'How pretty it is!—and how sweet you look, Hortensia!'

Her hands were full of fragrant carnations. 'For a peace offering,' she whispered, coming close to Hortensia's chair. I was wrong. And you didn't make me late, after all. May Ford was on the car I took, and we made such a lovely plan for Saturday. I'm glad I had to wait.'

'And I was going to ask you to forgive me!' Hortensia said. Her sister laughed, and dropped a kiss on the bright waves of hair. 'You don't know how sweet you look,' she said again.

The atmosphere at dinner was different from that at breakfast. Alice's carnations graced the table; Fred blushed and smiled above the torturing collar he had donned in honor of the evening's entertainment;

Mildred and Tommy dimpled into shy radiance as Hortensia told, with tender tact, of their loving plan for her birthday feast.

'The best housekeepers have failures with their cake sometimes,' she said; 'but we can all enjoy Mildred's in spirit; and the chickens are having a fine feast.'

As she came down the stairs, dainty and smiling, to meet her waiting escort, she overheard a whispered colloquy between Fred and Alice.

'Miss her at the academy?' Fred was saying. 'I reckon they do! But they don't half know what she is, anyway. I'd rather have her for a sister than a teacher.'

If We Had But a Day.

We should fill the hours with the sweetest things,

If we had but a day!

We should drink alone at the purest springs

In our upward way;

We should love with a lifetime's love in an hour,

If the hours were few;

We should rest, not for dreams, but for fresher power

To be and to do!

We should guide our wayward or wearied wills

By the clearest light;

We should keep our eyes on the heavenly hills,

If they lay in sight;

We should trample the pride and discontent

Beneath our feet;

We should take whatever the good God sent

With a trust complete!

We should waste no moments in weak regret,

If the day were but one;

If what we remember and what we forget Went out with the sun;

We should be from our clamorous selves set free,

To work or to pray,

And be what the father would have us be, If we had but a day!

—Mary Lowe Dickinson.

A Japanese, in the United States on business, found in his room in a New York hotel a copy of St. John's gospel; he became deeply interested in the account of the visit of Nicodemus to our Lord. He sought a Christian teacher, and before he returned to his country he became a Christian. To many thousands in similar ways the Scriptures have been the entrance into the kingdom of God.

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