

A Samaritan.

(A. Dawson, in 'English Sunday-School Times'.)

In the long school-room whose windows looked out on the garden, some five or six girls were gathered together, talking vivaciously. They were the boarders at Madam Bernard's school, and their subject was an impromptu picnic which was to take place next day.

'Every one has helped except Sylvia Lang,' declared one of them. 'I call it a shame of her.'

'Is she coming?' asked Phoebe March.

'Oh, yes, I suppose so; mean people always come to everything and give nothing.'

'I don't believe she is as poor as she wants us to believe,' said another. 'Anyway, she put a shilling into the plate last Sunday, for she dropped it on the floor of the pew, and I picked it up for her.'

'I daresay it is convenient to be poor when other people are there to provide,' sneered Marion Faber.

'Well, let us be thankful we are all ready to help when there is an entertainment going,' summed up Beatrice Ward, the first speaker and the chief organizer of the picnic. 'Now let me go over it all again to see that nothing is forgotten. You, Phoebe, gave the tarts; you, Marion, the lemonade; Madam will provide bread, butter and milk; Elsie and I between us the sandwiches; Carrie gave the strawberries. Now all we want is some cream, and then we shall be complete.'

'And Sylvia ought to give that,' said Marion emphatically.

There was a sudden hush, a turning of heads, and Sylvia was seen standing in the doorway.

She was a tall, slim girl, with a face so pretty that one looked only at it and not at the shabby black dress in which she was clothed. She held a little parcel in her hand and offered it to Beatrice.

'I am afraid I can't do that,' she said, 'but there are some chocolates I have got, perhaps they will do instead.'

A hasty glance went round, and Marion sniffed audibly. Sylvia's cheeks crimsoned.

'My mother sent them,' she said. 'I asked her if I might contribute something to the picnic, and the post has just brought this parcel. I think it was very kind of her.'

Then she went out again.

'They came from the shop, of course,' said Marion with a sneer. 'I wonder Sylvia had the face to show them.'

'Let us see,' said Phoebe, peering into the paper bag. 'Cheap and nasty, I expect, like most of Sylvia's productions, from her hats down to her boots!'

'Shame, Phoebe,' cried Elsie. 'Sylvia can't help being poor. It's Madam who is to blame for taking shopkeepers' daughters into the school. She can't expect us to mix.'

The others were silent, but Beatrice, who had taken one of the chocolates, made a face.

'What about the cream?' asked Carrie. 'She must have heard all that we were saying.'

'Never mind; listeners never hear good of themselves,' said Marion; 'and it won't hurt her to know what we expected of her!'

It was cool and green in the woods next day, and the beech boughs threw dappled shadows on the grassy bank where the picnic party had encamped. Behind them the thick trees clustered against the hill, climbing skyward—before them an emerald field sloped to the distant road by which they had come. It was but a few miles from home, but to the happy girls it might have been a

new world that day. Some flung themselves down in a lazy enjoyment of the warm air and lovely prospect, some wandered away to explore, some climbed the hill to find what lay beyond, as though they were Columbus and this their ocean.

Sylvia found herself alone. Her school-fellows had all paired off with one another, and none had cared to come with her. She was beginning to notice more and more that they avoided her.

Miss Eddowes, the governess, who had come in charge of the party, was busying herself in setting out the lunch, and no one had stayed to help her. Sylvia, who had been lingering near, watching with wistful eyes the scattered, merry groups that left her further and further behind, now went back and offered her help.

'Thank you, Sylvia, but why are you all alone? Do you not want to go off with the rest?'

'I can go afterwards,' said the girl, beginning to unpack the plates and dishes and to lay them out upon the cloth.

Miss Eddowes saw a gleam of tears in her eyes and said no more, and the work was nearly finished when Beatrice Ward came suddenly upon them out of the wood.

'Oh, what a shame!' she cried, 'and I have run all the way back on purpose to do this. It's only just luncheon time now, and you know I meant to do it, Miss Eddowes. What are you doing, Sylvia?'

Sylvia was taking sandwiches carefully out of a large paper bag and piling them upon a dish.

'Just leave that to me, will you,' said Beatrice brusquely. 'I undertook all this business, and I don't want any help, thank you. There isn't enough work for us all.'

Sylvia got up. 'You were not here,' she said, 'and Miss Eddowes was doing it.'

'Well, I am here now, and there is plenty of time. Miss Eddowes knew I had only just gone up the wood for a minute. Please pass me that basket of strawberries before you go, will you?'

When Beatrice's whistle summoned the girls to lunch, they were all ready to enjoy the good things set before them. There was a great deal of merry chatter as sandwiches, tarts and strawberries disappeared, and each girl had some tale to tell of her adventures.

'Where are Sylvia's chocolates?' asked Carrie, suddenly.

'Oh, I forgot!' said Beatrice. 'I believe they are over there, in the hamper.'

Carrie rose, and diving into the hamper, brought out a shapeless mass of pulpy chocolate cream, thinly disguised in paper.

'Oh, what a pity!' she cried. 'Whoever could have put them at the very bottom of the hamper to get squeezed like that?'

The girls glanced at Sylvia. They were all disappointed.

Beatrice and Marion exchanged looks, and Marion burst suddenly into a loud peal of laughter, pointing to the sticky mass in Carrie's hand. 'They look so funny!' she said, hysterically, wiping the tears from her eyes.

The afternoon passed away in renewed excursions and enjoyments, and at four o'clock some of the elder girls set out to walk home, Miss Eddowes with the younger ones remaining for the cart which was to come for them.

The golden air had grown suddenly grey and chilly, and the walkers set off briskly across the field path, which struck the road a quarter of a mile below.

Beguiled by talk and laughter, the way seemed short, and the gathering clouds were unnoticed till suddenly drop after drop of

heavy rain began to fall. Then all was panic. Gathering their light skirts round them, the girls began to run as fast as they could for the nearest shelter. The road was open and unprotected by trees, but half a mile further on stood a cluster of cottages, and towards this they hurried. The rain fell pitilessly, a violent downpour, and a distant rumble of thunder accompanied it. The road grew wet and dirty, the girls' dresses were soaked and their breath failed. But, dripping and exhausted, there was nothing for it but to press on and on, till at last they stood upon the doorstep of the first cottage. Marion lifted her hand and rapped twice sharply.

The door was instantly opened by a tall woman. She was dressed in black and wore a broad-brimmed hat tied under the chin with soft ribbons. She begged them to come in out of the rain, 'but step quietly,' she said, 'for there is some one sick upstairs.'

She led the way to a little kitchen, clean and neat, where a fire was burning, and bade them dry their clothes. There will be no one here,' she said, 'and you must be very wet. You can stay till the rain is over, but you must be very quiet, for the sick room is just overhead.' Then she left them.

They clustered round the fire, talking in loud whispers and giggling schoolgirlishly.

'What an old stick she is!' said Marion.

'I believe she would have refused us admittance if she had dared,' announced Beatrice.

'I don't believe there's any one ill at all,' said a third. 'It's just a ruse to make us keep quiet. Come in, Sylvia, you are as wet as any of us.'

(To be Continued.)

I Kept Right At It.

Mr. Studd, of the China Inland Mission, was addressing a body of undergraduates. 'When I was at Cambridge,' he said, 'I was very fond of athletics. I would play cricket a whole afternoon with a man to get him to go to meeting with me in the evening.'

'Once a friend of mine said to me, "Studd, when you play a game of cricket, do you ask God to help you win?" "Yes, I do," I told him. "Well, I used to do that," he said; "but it occurred to me that perhaps the other fellow didn't, and it seemed like taking an advantage of him. So I stopped it." But I didn't stop,' Mr. Studd went on in his address. 'I said to myself that if the other men were foolish enough not to pray for the game, it was their own fault. And I kept right at it.'

A college student who had just passed a set of examinations which were unusually difficult, to judge by the universal voice of lamentation, said, 'I never went to one of those examinations without asking God to help me, and I never forgot, but once, to go to my room afterward and thank him for his help.'

A young preacher, well reported of by all the brethren for the zeal and usefulness of his pastoral work, one day stopped a factory hand, as they met, for a warm personal talk. In the course of it he said to him: 'My dear fellow, I am bringing you my Master's message. When I saw you coming up the road, I lifted my heart to him and said, "Lord, give me the words for this man." I very often do it, and I tell you it strengthens me for my work.'

When every member of the Church of Jesus Christ shall pray at his tasks, and at his play, and in his direct efforts for souls, then surely 'God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.'—Sally Campbell, in 'Christian Endeavor World.'